



Next Iconic Walk

Aboriginal Interpretation Framework

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Statement for Country

Palawa¹ people of Lutruwita (Tasmania) have been here since the time of Creation; since two star brothers, Muyini and Rrunitina created Palawa, the First Ancestor to walk on the earth. After which the ground was cut to make the islands, mountains, waterways and seas. Since then, Palawa families have lived within their Country. Long-held cultural knowledge and an innate connection with the environment shaped every aspect of their daily lives. Cultural practices were informed by the environment and long-standing traditions, interacting with the landscape in a way that enhanced nature's awe-inspiring capacity of renewal, rebirth, and continuance. Reciprocity was key to the survival of all species.

Country speaks to these interconnected reciprocal systems - land, water, and sky. Country supports flora, fauna, people, spirituality, ancient knowledge, cultural practice, lore, and language – the tangible and intangible. Country relates to the land we belong to, are born of, and will return to. Aboriginal people understand that Country must be nurtured and cared for – that is that if we take care of Country, Country will care for us.

The Northwest Nation's Country extended from Table Cape in the east through to Cape Grim and south to the northern end of Macquarie Harbour. Some islands located off the coast were also part of their Country.

Guided by Milaythina Wurangkili, Tunapri Pulana & Pulana Palawa Ngini (Sky Knowledge, Star Knowledge and Star Ancestors), which determine seasonal patterns of Country they travelled within their ancestral homelands, sustainably maintaining Country and the resources she provides, and fulfilling their ceremonial obligations.

Along the coast, plentiful amounts of shellfish, marine vegetables, small animals and birds provided a healthy and varied diet. Kangaroo, wallaby and plants were also a source of food, which extended inland.

While the planned development of the Tyndall Ranges walking track and associated infrastructure does not directly impact on known Aboriginal heritage, it will impact on the Aboriginal landscape. Likewise, 'wilderness' as described in English suggest 'places without people'. For Aboriginal people this notion is simply not the case. Country needs her people. Access to Ancestral homelands was and remains interrelated with the health and wellbeing of both Country and Aboriginal people.

The stories of Country are our (Palawa) roots, and our inheritance, and will be the foundations of our work and the places we create. Many of these stories are being told to the wider community for the first time, and this Next Iconic Walk (NIW) is an opportunity to *fill* places with them, telling them often and generously until we all understand the depth of the rich cultural inheritance found within this part of Country.

¹ Palawa and Pakana are used interchangeably. They are two palawa kani words meaning Tasmanian Aboriginal person; black person. Palawa is also the name of the First Ancestor to walk this earth.



Introduction

The proposed Next Iconic Walk (NIW) in Lutruwita (Tasmania) extends across various protected areas, including the Tyndall Regional Reserve and Lake Beatrice Conservation Area, situated approximately 10 km north of Queenstown. The project aims to create a sustainable walking track experience while recognising and preserving Aboriginal cultural heritage values.

Above, we offer a *Statement for Country* with the vision that this will expand as research and Aboriginal community engagement continue. This document also provides a summary of two comprehensive reports that set the scene for the way in which this framework is being developed as it is important to understand this work in the context of ongoing Aboriginal community engagement. We also provide an overview of the available ethnohistory of the area and the Aboriginal community consultation to date. It is this cultural understanding of Country together with the ongoing Aboriginal community engagement, that has inspired the guiding principles; potential themes and storylines; modes of delivery; and key messaging. We provide these ideas as a *framework* to inform the recommended next steps to develop a comprehensive Aboriginal Interpretation Strategy. This work will also feed into the broader NIW Interpretation Strategy prepared by Charlie Bravo Design (CBD).

Summary of Previous Relevant Studies

Several key reports have informed our understanding of the cultural landscape within which the NIW is located and have been used as a guide in developing the draft Aboriginal Interpretation Framework.

The *Aboriginal Heritage Assessment Report for the Next Iconic Walk Project*, authored by CHMA Pty Ltd and Aboriginal Heritage Officers Rocky Sainty and Vernon Graham, provides comprehensive information about the tangible Aboriginal heritage located and registered within the project area. The assessment is part of Stage 2 of the overall project, following a preliminary desktop assessment conducted in 2021. Key Findings include:

1. **Cultural Significance:** The project area is situated within the traditional lands of the Peternidic clan of the North West Nation. An Aboriginal Heritage Register (AHR) search identified two registered Aboriginal heritage sites within a 500m radius of the project area, both classified as occupied Aboriginal rock shelters (AH2379 and AH14132).
2. **Survey Results:** Field surveys recorded two Aboriginal sites, both of which correlate with previously registered sites. The assessment concluded that the project footprint has a low to very low potential for undetected Aboriginal sites, primarily due to the sparse density of archaeological deposits observed.
3. **Environmental Setting:** The environmental assessment characterised the landscape, noting that Aboriginal occupation patterns are influenced by environmental factors such as topography and resource availability. The rugged terrain presents challenges for archaeological visibility, with surface visibility during surveys estimated between 10% to 50%.



4. **Management Recommendations:** The report outlines several management recommendations to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage, including:

- Avoiding direct impacts on recorded sites.
- Ongoing consultation with the Aboriginal community throughout the project's development.
- Implementation of an *Unanticipated Discovery Plan* to manage any archaeological finds during construction.
- Development of a detailed Aboriginal cultural interpretation plan, emphasising the involvement of Tasmanian Aboriginal people.

Overall, the assessment provides a comprehensive overview of the Aboriginal heritage values associated with the project area, the findings from fieldwork, and the necessary steps for responsible management and community engagement moving forward. While the assessment identified no physical remains of heritage sites within the NIW impact area, it is noted that intangible cultural heritage and the relationship between Aboriginal people and the natural values associated with the 'wilderness' require further research.

The NIW is on the 'boundary' of, and therefore a gateway view to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA). It is therefore an opportunity to share stories that connect the natural and cultural values. The *Tourism Master Plan for the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (TWWHA)* has therefore also been informative in developing the suggested guiding principles below. The Tourism Master Plan outlines a strategic framework for managing tourism in this environmentally and culturally significant region of Lutruwita/Tasmania. Overall, the Tourism Master Plan aims to ensure that Aboriginal cultural values are protected, presented authentically, and integrated into the visitor experience while empowering the Tasmanian Aboriginal community to take an active role in the management of their cultural heritage. Critically, the Tourism Master Plan emphasises the importance of providing conscious, meaningful, and authentic experiences that reflect the rich cultural heritage of Tasmanian Aboriginal people, thus promoting a deeper understanding of their connection to the land.

Summary of Ethnohistory

The ethnohistory of this area is not definitive. However, Pakana Ngini (the Old People) of this landscape were innately connected to it. The topography of Country was shaped at the time of Creation. Each mountain, river, lagoon and valley carried names in language born of Country. Not all that information was told to colonial settlers, including government agent George Augustus Robinson who conducted 'expeditions' around the island between 1829-34 in his quest of persuading the Aboriginal people who remained on their Country to leave for a time. As a result, any deep knowledge has generally been lost to the Palawa community who have survived. This does not mean that they do not exist and/or cannot be retrieved.

Aboriginal man Penderoin, of the Western Nation who was among the guides and interpreters travelling with George Augustus Robinson on his last 'expedition' told him that the name of the people inhabiting the Country inland, and living in the bush between the Pieman River and Macquarie



Harbour was the Peternidic (Robinsons journals, 22/6/1834). Early attempts at 'mapping' the territories of Pakana Ngini of Lutruwita show much of the Peternidic ancestral homelands as 'unoccupied' (Jones in Tindale p.327). We know this to be inaccurate, because of the amount of tangible heritage that exists within Country; including hand stencils, markings made in rock and on the walls of caves and rock shelters; living places and hut depressions. Messages from a people who had subsisted sustainably over many, many generations; having survived two ice ages.

The social organisation of Tasmanian Aboriginal society (pre-colonisation) consisted of three main units: the hearth group (the basic family unit), the band or clan (comprising multiple hearth groups), and the Tribe or Nation, which represented a larger political unit. The North West Nation, comprising eight clans, was one of the largest in Lutruwita, with a population estimated between 400-600 individuals.

The available ethnohistoric information suggests that the Tyndall Range was not a primary route for the Peternidic people or other clans of the North West Nation, as they primarily moved along established pathways and coastal fringes. The nearest significant traveling routes were reported to be further north and along the coastal margins. Currently there are no known documented accounts of direct contact between Aboriginal people and European settlers within the project area, although government agents like Robinson traversed nearby regions in the 1830s.

In terms of subsistence, Aboriginal people utilised the landscape based on seasonal availability of resources, focusing their activities in more resource-rich areas such as coastal regions and major river valleys. Ethnohistorical records emphasise the significance of established walking tracks used by the North West Nation for seasonal movement, indicating a deep understanding of the landscape and its resources.

Overall, the ethnohistorical context indicates that while the Tyndall Range area was part of the traditional lands of the North West Nation, it was not a focal point of intensive Aboriginal activity, with the broader cultural landscape reflecting a connection to the coastal and more accessible areas where resources were abundant.

Aboriginal Community Consultation

To date, Aboriginal community consultation for the NIW has centred around the Aboriginal heritage assessments. CHMA with Aboriginal Heritage Officers Rocky Sainty and Vernon Graham implemented a comprehensive consultation program, involving multiple Aboriginal organisations. Feedback indicated the need for ongoing consultation, recognition of Aboriginal cultural values, and the development of an Aboriginal cultural interpretation plan for the project.

Palawa consultant Rachel Dunn (Jenname) was also contracted by Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife (PWS) to undertake a full consultation program on all aspects of the NIW to alleviate consultation fatigue within the Community. Specific questions posed by Milangkani Projects to inform this framework document, included:



- Are there any key themes you would like to see included in the Aboriginal interpretation strategy?
- What messages should the Aboriginal interpretation convey to visitors?
- How would you like to see Aboriginal stories and perspectives told/represented in the Tyndall Ranges Next Iconic Walk?

Feedback provided by Jenname outlines broad, surface level (but key) insights and recommendations for the cultural interpretation of the Tyndall Ranges. It emphasises Aboriginal community-led storytelling, inclusive language, and engaging interpretive tools as pivotal to honouring Aboriginal cultural heritage. It stresses the importance of collaboration with Aboriginal Elders and knowledge holders for content development, and the use of various media such as interpretive panels, audio guides, and art installations to convey cultural narratives. Additionally, it highlights the need for partnerships, workshops, and training programs for Aboriginal rangers or guides to ensure authentic cultural representation and visitor engagement while promoting intergenerational perspectives and cultural sustainability.

It was intended that this framework would be driven by the consultation feedback from Jenname, however, due to time pressures the consultation report has only recently been received. Regardless, this important work will continue to inform the final version of the Aboriginal Interpretation Strategy. The feedback fortunately supports the direction of the framework outlined below. This will help guide co-design workshops and will not include any detailed research (or stories) at this stage. As indicated through the consultation process, it is important that this is developed over time with the input of recognised Aboriginal knowledge holders.

Guiding Principles

Our method of working centres around Country; her people, landscape and storying. The Tyndall Ranges is an extraordinarily spectacular and dramatic landscape of cliffs, lakes and varied vegetation types with a powerful sense of being wild and remote; the remoteness however does not indicate that the area has been one without people. While the Tyndall Ranges was chosen for these features, it is critical to remember that this area is part of an ancient cultural landscape managed for millennia by the Peterndic. Overarching guiding principles will help ensure authenticity and consistency throughout the entire NIW development. These will continue to be developed and refined throughout the co-design workshops. As a start, we propose the following:

- Tell Aboriginal stories with Aboriginal voice – through audio, written, and visual elements
- Include Aboriginal knowledges within the ‘general/broader’ interpretation content e.g. – using language to name animals, plants and locations (when known).
- Enhance engagement with Aboriginal cultural values
- Convey the deep interconnections between cultural and natural values
- Allow space for truth-telling
- Celebrate the survival of the Palawa community and culture
- Be place (Country) specific



- Emphasizes the importance of recognizing and respecting Aboriginal heritage
- Build-in ongoing engagement to ensure cultural relevance and sustainability
- Factually correct and
- Culturally authentic

Potential Themes and Storylines

While the planned development of the NIW walking track and associated infrastructure does not directly impact on known (tangible) Aboriginal heritage, it will impact on the Aboriginal landscape. Likewise, 'wilderness' as described in English suggest 'places without people'. For Aboriginal people this notion is simply not the case. Country needs her people. Access to ancestral homelands was and remains interrelated with the health and wellbeing of both Country and people.

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The Peternidic are no longer physically within their Country. It is then, the responsibility of the surviving Palawa community is to ensure that the Peternidic are never forgotten. That their place in the history of the Aboriginal landscape that will see the NIW developed is acknowledged, honoured and celebrated.

A journey-based experiences can provide cohesive and engaging narratives for visitors, highlighting cultural and natural values along significant routes. Two significant Aboriginal cultural heritage sites have been identified and registered within the NIW area. While the sites will not be impacted, this is a clear indication that the walk is located within an Aboriginal landscape and therefore a great launch pad to discussing ice age living in Lutruwita (Tasmania).

As a starting point, we have devised three overarching themes with a subset of potential stories and/or educational content to be further explored with Aboriginal knowledge holders.

1) Deep Time to Present

- Ice Age life
- Darwin glass
- Petroglyphs and cultural life
- Dome shaped huts and Aboriginal villages
- Colonisation and Robinson's journey
- Now: Aboriginal protection of heritage, World Heritage Area (WHA) listing, land rights, caring for Country

2) Dark Skies



- Creation stories – “lala the ant”
- Dark sky connections – “stingray in the sky”
- Protecting intangible heritage – a dark sky sanctuary for Lutruwita

3) A Managed Landscape

- Wilderness or cultural landscape?
- Trade routes
- Controlled burns + creation of the button-grass plains
- Bush food and medicines
- Connecting with Country today

Modes of Delivery

The Gateway shelter and facilities located at the beginning of the walk is the ideal place to ‘set the scene’ for walkers by providing an Acknowledgement and Statement for Country. This is also the place to set out the expectations of visitors on Aboriginal Country. This could be in the form of an installation or sculptural work created by Community artist(s).

Within the NIW, there will be two overnight accommodation facilities and a further three shelters located approximately halfway through each day’s walk. These ‘nodes’ provide obvious points for interpretation delivery. This could again be delivered through installation or sculpture, and/or through signage panels or design elements of the facilities and wayfinding elements.

Technology provides a range of innovative ways to deliver information however, many people undertake these walks to escape technology. The use of QR Codes to link more in-depth content, podcast interviews (Stories of Country) or other audiovisual material could be considered. A ‘take home’ booklet or map that includes cultural interpretation may also be an effective educational tool and become a memento for visitors completing the track. Some elements may work as standalone interpretation nodes, while others could be incorporated into the same delivery mode as the broader stories told by CBD.

The use of Aboriginal language throughout the NIW (not just the Aboriginal interpretation) is also a powerful acknowledgment. Naming of tracks and huts, and the use of language words pertinent to the walk - such as place names, animals, plants, geographical features - should be considered through Aboriginal community engagement.

It is important to emphasise that the ‘modes of delivery’ of Aboriginal knowledges and stories must be developed and refined through the next stage of Aboriginal community co-design workshops.



Key Messaging

Overall, the Aboriginal cultural values within the NIW and surrounds are complex and multifaceted, representing a continuous and evolving relationship between Aboriginal people and the environment. Key messages that should underpin the Aboriginal interpretation material include:

- **Connection to Country:** The land, sea, and sky are seen as integral to the identity and spirituality of Aboriginal people, encompassing ancestry, culture, language, and law.
- **Cultural Heritage:** The NIW is recognised as part of a cultural landscape that carries both tangible (e.g., archaeological sites, ceremonial places) and intangible (e.g., stories, customs) cultural heritage.
- **Sovereignty and Self-Determination:** Aboriginal people assert their sovereignty over the land, which was never ceded, and emphasize the importance of self-determination in managing and interpreting their cultural heritage.
- **Cultural Practices:** There is a focus on revitalizing and maintaining cultural practices, including language, storytelling, and traditional land management techniques, which are essential for passing knowledge to future generations.
- **Caring for Country:** This involves ongoing activities that promote ecological health, reflecting the belief that caring for the land is intertwined with cultural and community well-being.

Next Steps

- **Ongoing Research**

This phase will include site visits where possible/practicable and research activities, including historical documents and archives, previous archaeological and cultural heritage reports and other relevant papers, articles etc. The research will also include identifying Aboriginal community knowledge holders and/or any relevant oral histories. This research will provide more depth to key themes identified in the draft strategy, including stories and historical facts that can inform the community co-design workshops.

- **Co-design Workshops**

Co-design is a partnership approach and will involve inviting individual Aboriginal community members who are identified throughout the research phase as key knowledge holders, story tellers, artists, cultural practitioners, cultural heritage and/or natural values experts and so on, to be part of either individual or small group consultations. We propose to hold at least two half day workshops to present our research, workshop ideas and facilitate a genuine 'co-design' process to the strategy development. However, we emphasise that co-design is a process not an event, and the collaborative ideas developed through this will inform a culturally relevant Interpretation Strategy that recognises the deep cultural and community knowledge of the Aboriginal community – and that



ensures the Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) remains with the Aboriginal community.

We suggest a budget is allocated for these workshops to provide a participant fee. This should be managed by the project manager (CBD).

- **Finalisation of Aboriginal Interpretation Strategy**

Working closely with CBD and utilising the consultation report from Jenname, together with the research and co-design process outlined above, Milangkani will develop a Tasmanian Aboriginal Interpretation Strategy as a separate but closely aligned document, for the overall interpretation strategy for the *NIW Concept Development*.

The Strategy will detail how visitor education, information and interpretation is to be provided. Noting that the finer details will be finalised before the commencement of the walk. This will inform the final written content and design elements for the Aboriginal interpretation within the NIW.