



Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park

Draft Management Plan 2026



Government of South Australia
Department for Environment
and Water

Contents

Acknowledgement of Country	II
Your views are important	1
Co-management Board welcome	3
Developing this draft plan	3
Directions for management	4
Management zones	7
Significance and Purpose	8
Challenges and opportunities	10
Theme 1: Shared journey	12
Theme 2: Working together	16
Theme 3: Creating a strong future	20
Invitation to contribute	24
References	27

Acknowledgement of Yarta (Country)

We acknowledge the Adnyamathanha people as the traditional custodians of the land encompassing Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging, and honour their enduring connection to this sacred landscape. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs, and profound relationship with the land that continues to be essential to the Adnyamathanha people today.





Your views are important

The Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Draft Management Plan outlines the objectives and strategies that will set the strategic direction for the management of the park.

It is released for public comment to provide members of the community an opportunity to express their views on the future management of the park.

Feedback received will be considered in the development of a final plan. Once developed, the final plan will be submitted to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for adoption under Section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

I encourage all interested people to assist in shaping the long-term management of this park by making a submission on this draft plan. Guidance for the preparation of a submission can be found on page 24.

Michael Williams

Director of National Parks and Wildlife



Developing this draft plan

The Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Draft Management Plan has been developed by the Department for Environment and Water in partnership with the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board and Adnyamathanha traditional owners.

The objectives and strategies outlined in this draft plan have been developed with input from Adnyamathanha people, volunteers, and park managers.

To encourage further community input, a draft park management plan has now been released for public consultation as required under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

Once adopted, this plan will replace the current park management plan that was adopted in 2006.

Co-management Board welcome

The Adnyamathanha people are the traditional owners of the land encompassing Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park, a place rich in cultural and spiritual significance. They have sustained a deep connection to this Country for tens of thousands of years, a living bond grounded in Yura Muda (Adnyamathanha belief of creation). The Adnyamathanha people's cultural practices and beliefs are inextricably linked through their relationship with the land, plants, animals and Awi Urtu (ephemeral streams and waterholes) of the northern Flinders Ranges, with knowledge that is passed down from generation to generation.

Cultural knowledge is integral to the practice of caring for Country and supporting the spiritual health of the Adnyamathanha people. Through co-management, the Adnyamathanha people choose to share their culture with visitors and encourage an emotional connection to

the park. Combining traditional and scientific knowledge and practices grows our understanding of keeping Country healthy and will help to create a strong future for generations to come.

The Adnyamathanha people continue to care for this Country today, as co-managers of the park with the Department for Environment and Water. We welcome visitors to share this park with us, to enjoy the experiences it has to offer and to embrace the spirit of Adnyamathanha culture as we care for Country together.

The Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board is proud to present this draft plan, which was prepared to coincide with 20 years of co-management celebrated in 2025. This draft plan will direct the co-management of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park for the future.

Cheryl Waye

Adnyamathanha woman
and Deputy Chairperson,
Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges
National Park Co-management Board

Jason Irving

Chairperson,
Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges
National Park Co-management Board

*'Inyardi
Ngarlparlaru
yarta'*

- Traditional Adnyamathanha greeting



Photo: South Australian Tourism Commission

Directions for management

This draft plan sets the strategic direction for the long-term management of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park (Figure 1), a 126,000-hectare park of spectacular cultural and environmental value, and part of the traditional lands of the Adnyamathanha people.

The importance of supporting the continuous connection and involvement of Adnyamathanha people in managing their Country has been acknowledged by the formation of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board (the Board) in 2005.

The Board is responsible for the management of this park and is comprised of representatives of the Adnyamathanha people and the Department for Environment and Water. The functions and powers of the Board are prescribed within the Co-management Agreement, the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*, and the *National Parks and Wildlife (National Parks) Regulations 2016*.

South Australia's national parks are managed to achieve the objectives of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. These objectives ensure that the parks are managed primarily for conservation, while supporting public visitation and education about the park's purpose and significance.

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park will be managed to improve the integrity of important ecological communities, protect important cultural sites, maintain the high wilderness quality, minimise impacts to natural ecological processes, and enable people to experience this park by offering remote, outback experiences. No mining is permitted within the park to support management objectives.

Management programs will utilise the best available scientific information and contemporary management practices and will be enhanced by working with Adnyamathanha people to include traditional knowledge and learn from their experience managing their Country.

This draft plan outlines the key strategic priorities for management of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park. Detailed actions to address the strategies outlined in this draft plan are developed and monitored at a park operations level, enabling an adaptive approach to managing future challenges.

The park is co-named to reflect co-management and Adnyamathanha traditional owners. Vulkathunha is an Adnyamathanha word which literally means 'old lady' and reflects a significant Adnyamathanha story connected to this Country.

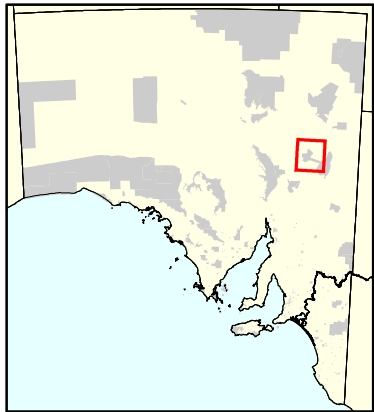
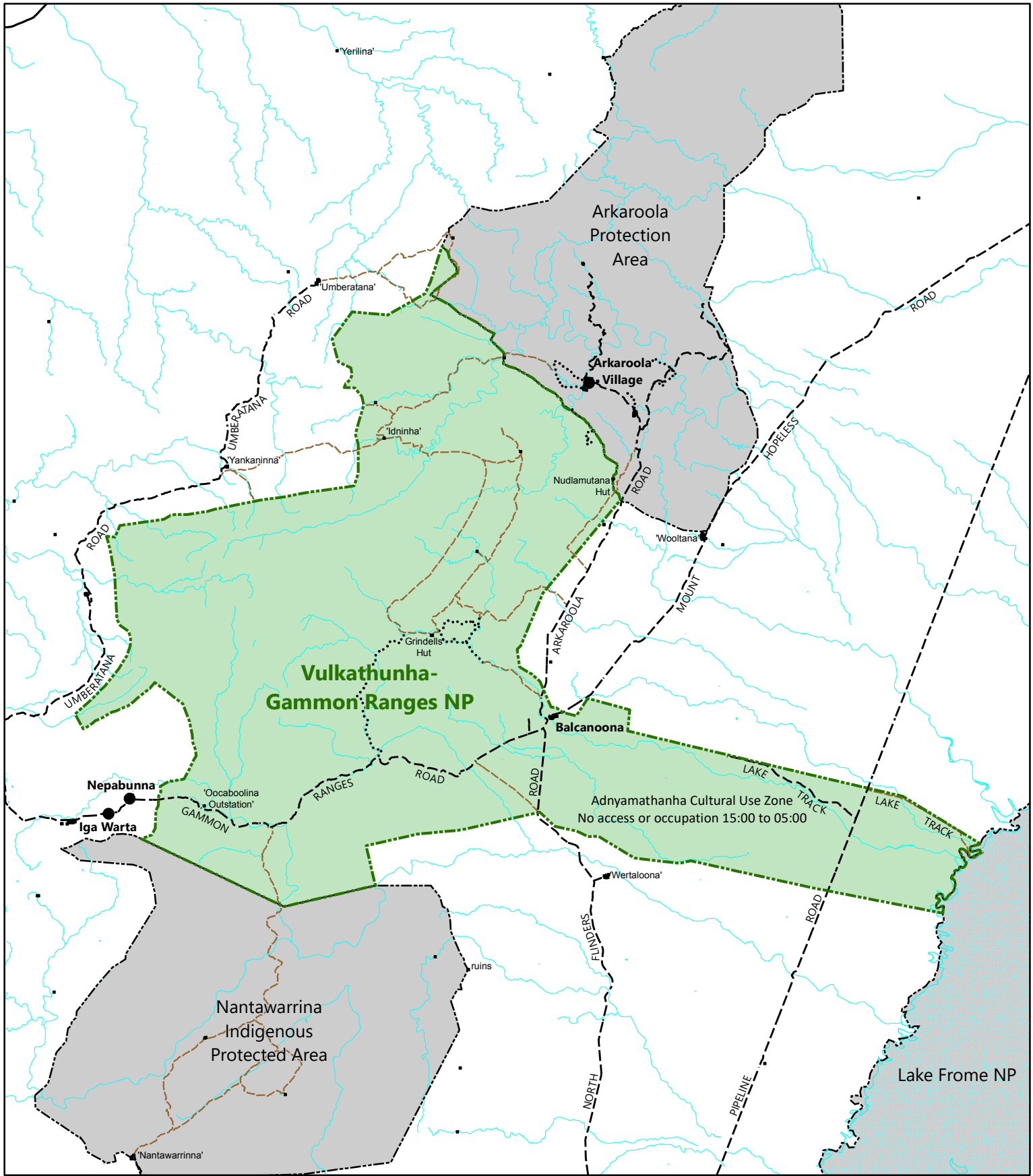
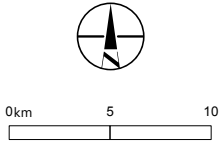


Figure 1
Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges
National Park



LEGEND

- Building
- Sealed road
- - - Unsealed road
- - - Vehicle track
- Trail
- ~~~~~ Watercourse
- ~~~~~ Intermittent waterbody
- ▬ Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park
- ▬ Other protected areas

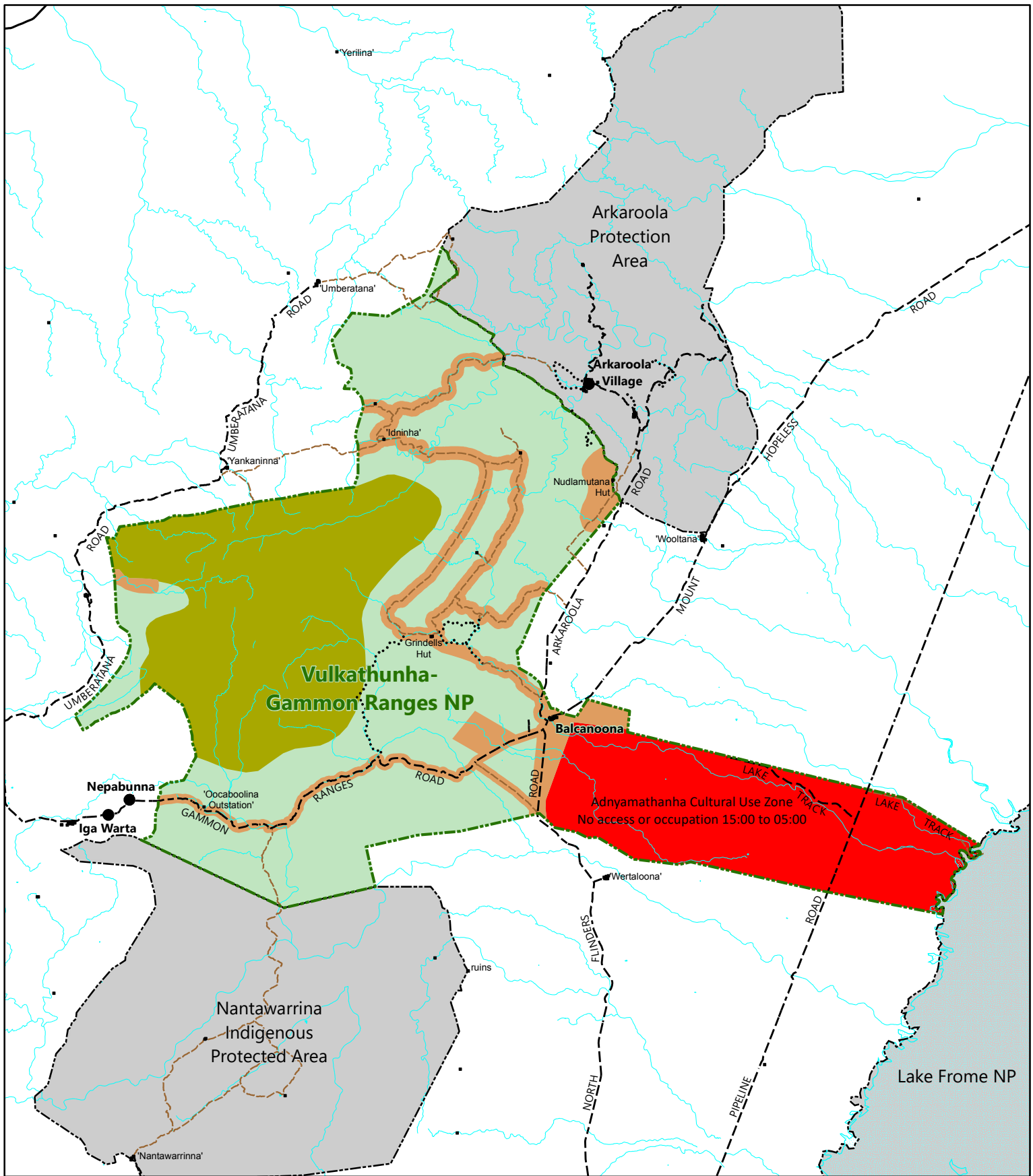


Figure 2

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park

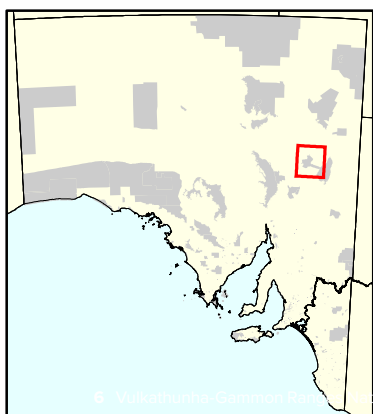
Management Zones

LEGEND

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| • Building | Conservation Zone |
| — Sealed road | Cultural Use Zone |
| - - - Unsealed road | Wilderness Protection Zone |
| - - - Vehicle track | Visitor Use Zone |
| Trail | Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park |
| ~ Watercourse | Other protected areas |
| ~ Intermittent waterbody | |



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Management zones

Section 39 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* determines that a management plan may provide for the division of a reserve into management zones and that each zone must be kept and maintained in accordance with the conditions outlined in the management plan.

Four management zones have been designated in Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park (refer to Figure 2) to establish a framework for sustainable use of the park. While the entire park is of cultural significance to the Adnyamathanha people and permits traditional access, having a significant area set aside for traditional use (the Cultural Use Zone) allows for certainty in management and prevents any potential for conflict between different user groups. Further restrictions for the protection of culturally significant sites, conservation outcomes, or to exclude public access to areas considered high-risk to visitor safety, may be implemented where necessary, including within the Visitor Use Zone.

Wilderness Protection Zone

The Wilderness Protection Zone is of high wilderness quality and includes the park's most important and often its most fragile environmental assets. The intention is to minimise human disturbance but still allow well-equipped park visitors, travelling on foot. Visitor facilities are restricted to low impact uses such as walking trails, and ancillary facilities such as trails heads and trail signage where necessary to minimise public risk and environmental damage. Management vehicles are permitted within this zone for essential management operations only. Public vehicle access is prohibited at all times.

Conservation Zone

The Conservation Zone serves as a buffer between the Wilderness Protection Zone and Visitor Use Zone. This zone contains high conservation values and will be managed primarily for the protection of ecological and cultural values. Visitor facilities and infrastructure within this zone will be limited to support activities deemed sustainable and compatible with the protection of park values and include low-impact uses such as walking trails, day-visitor areas (including associated essential facilities such as shelters and basic seating), and ancillary facilities such as trails heads and trail signage where necessary to minimise public risk and environmental damage.

Cultural Use Zone

The Cultural Use Zone provides an area for exclusive use by Adnyamathanha people to undertake non-commercial activities for cultural, spiritual, and traditional purposes such as camping, ceremonies, gathering of food, cooking, teaching, and hunting. Hunting by Adnyamathanha people in the Cultural Use Zone is permitted between the hours of 15:00 and 05:00 and in accordance with the provisions in this plan and conditions determined by the Board. Park visitors will continue to have access through this zone to view Munda (Lake Frome) within the hours not designated for hunting. Any other visitation to this zone by the general public is prohibited. The Moomba-Adelaide gas pipeline crosses this zone. Third party access along this easement is limited to the use and maintenance of the pipeline.

Development of basic facilities necessary to support sustainable use and to limit environmental impacts is seen as appropriate in this zone. Signage and information is available to visitors advising of the special arrangements applying in this zone.

Visitor Use Zone

The Visitor Use Zone has the highest level of visitation. Infrastructure and facilities in this zone includes roads, interpretive sites and trails, overnight accommodation including campsites, huts and shearer's quarters, and park administration buildings and residences. Small scale development and commercial tourism activities that are complementary to existing visitation and diversifies the range of experiences on offer are appropriate within the Visitor Use Zone. Development must be ecologically sensitive, ensure minimal impacts to the natural, cultural, recreational, and heritage values of the park, and be sympathetic to the aesthetic values of the site. Respectful use of Country is required for all activities occurring within the Visitor Use Zone. Tourist accommodation is permitted in this zone.



Photo: South Australian Tourism Commission

Significance and Purpose

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park protects a unique arid landscape with varying terrain of deep gorges, rocky plains, steep mountains, and stony riverbeds. This land is culturally significant to Adnyamathanha people, and contains cultural sites, ancient rock art, and traditionally used lands. First proclaimed in 1970, the park protects a range of ecological values including threatened species, habitat for species of national conservation significance, and the entirety of an arid water catchment system across the Balcanoona catchment.

The Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park is located in the northern Flinders Ranges of South Australia, approximately 700km north of Adelaide (Figure 1). The park lies 100km east of the township of Leigh Creek, encompassing the Gammon Ranges, Mount McTaggart, Hawker Hill and follows Balcanoona Creek across the plains, east to Lake Frome National Park. Bioregions are a nationally recognised landscape-scale approach to classifying the environment using a range of attributes such as climate, geology, soils and vegetation. The majority of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park is a part of the Northern Flinders subregion of the Flinders Lofty Block, a bioregion which has been highly modified due to a long

history of excessive total grazing pressure and extensive degradation (DCCEEW, 2008). Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park protects some of the best quality intact wilderness areas within the Flinders Lofty Block (Watson et al. 2023), making it a vitally important component to the reserve system across this bioregion, and signifies the habitat value of the area.

The plains block on the east side of the park was added in 1984 and connects the park to Lake Frome National Park along the course of Balcanoona Creek. This section of the park is part of the Stony Plains bioregion, characterised by more arid conditions, open stony plains, tussock grasslands and chenopod shrublands. The area is significant for protecting the Balcanoona Creek as it flows towards Lake Frome and is managed as a Cultural Use Zone for traditional hunting. The Stony Plains bioregion is underrepresented in the reserve system, and the Murnpeowie subregion contains no formal protected areas other than this block.

The park is part of a complex of areas managed mostly for conservation, including the Nantawarrina Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), Lake Frome National Park, and the Arkaroola Protection Area. Together, these areas form



a contiguous block of over 5,000 square kilometres of protected arid lands. Other adjacent properties further support conservation of the natural environment including the Mount Serle Pastoral Lease, Nipapanha Aboriginal Community, and land managed by the Operation Flinders Foundation.

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park contains iconic features that provide insight into the region's unique geology and geomorphology. The geology of the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park is dominated by some of the oldest rocks in the Adelaide Rift Complex. Spanning over 280-million years, this stratigraphic sequence includes the Cryogenian Period (~717-635 million years ago), which was defined by two major glacial events: the older, the Sturtian Glaciation, and the younger, the Marinoan Glaciation.

The rhythmites, a specific outcrop of the Elatina Formation which formed during the Marinoan Glaciation, are exposed along a creek bed and form the walls of a small gorge. They are very thin layers, typically formed from fine-grained sandstone, siltstone, and mudstone deposits that accumulate on top of each other during tidal cycles. The rhythmites, which are interpreted to represent a

pristine record of daily, monthly and annual tide cycles, recorded at the end of the Cryogenian Period, reinforce our understanding of the Earth that existed before and during the dawn of animal life. Due to the importance of this geological feature in representing a major stage of earth's history, the area encompassing the outcrop is a component part of the World Heritage nomination for the Flinders Ranges.

The spectacular landscape features of this park are integral to the spiritual beliefs of the Adnyamathanha people, and access to certain locations and sites may be culturally forbidden for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people.

The combination of rich cultural history, rare and iconic wildlife, high wilderness value, and spectacular arid geology brings many visitors to Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park. Visitors are drawn to the park to camp, hike, learn about the cultural history of the region, and be among the spectacular landscapes of the northern Flinders Ranges. The park has become an iconic place for dedicated bushwalkers and bush campers seeking a remote, wilderness experience with minimal services. Huts which have been maintained and improved by dedicated volunteers help cater to these visitors.



What are we looking after?

The Adnyamathanha people have an intricate relationship with the land, plants, animals and Awi Urtu (ephemeral streams and waterholes) of the northern Flinders Ranges. This relationship is called Yura Muda (Adnyamathanha belief of creation). For Adnyamathanha people, everything in Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park is important and interconnected through Yura Muda. The park protects:

- Significant ancient Aboriginal rock art, sites of Aboriginal significance and Aboriginal occupation sites.
- A landscape of cultural significance to the Adnyamathanha people.
- Some of the only areas of remaining high wilderness quality in the northern Flinders sub-region.
- A component of the Flinders Ranges World Heritage nomination which contributes to the story of the dawn of animal life.
- Spectacular geological and geomorphological features.
- An arid-zone water catchment and drainage system, which supports native species including a population of the Flinders ranges purple-spotted gudgeon (*Mogurnda clivicola*), one of South Australia's most critically endangered fish species.
- Over 970 plant species including regionally endemic species such as curly mallee (*Eucalyptus gillii*), nationally threatened species such as spidery wattle (*Acacia araneosa*) and species such as broombush (*Melaleuca uncinata*), which are of high conservation significance due to their restricted distribution and ecological value.
- Populations of the threatened Andu (yellow-footed rock-wallaby) (*Petrogale xanthopus*) and recently reintroduced Idnya (western quoll) (*Dasyurus geoffroii*).
- A variety of species listed under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) and the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* (NPW Act).
- A key site for the *Bounceback* program, a landscape scale conservation program focusing on the protection and restoration of semi-arid environments.
- Examples of the history of early colonial occupation and settlement.
- A space which offers a remote, iconic wilderness experience for visitors.

Challenges and opportunities

Key challenges and opportunities in the protection and management of this park are:

- Managing the impacts of pest plants and animals, and total grazing pressure to protect threatened species and ecosystem health.
- Continuing to improve the condition of degraded ecological communities.
- Maintaining visitor access and improving the visitor experience in a remote and wild landscape.
- Integrating the spiritual, cultural and social beliefs, rights and aspirations of the Adnyamathanha people into park management.
- Interpreting, researching, and securing the protection of the globally significant geological and paleontological features of the park.
- Inclusion of the park in the UNESCO World Heritage nomination for the Flinders Ranges.
- Assisting Adnyamathanha people and their families to maintain close connections to the park, participate in traditional practices and benefit from tourism and other economic ventures.
- Optimising the economic benefits to the community arising from tourism.
- Ensuring that access and information at heritage sites is culturally appropriate and helps people to gain an appreciation of Adnyamathanha culture while also ensuring that the cultural, economic and intellectual interests of the Adnyamathanha people are protected.
- Protecting culturally highly significant rock art sites and managing public access to sites that should not be visited for cultural reasons.
- Communicating to visitors about safety, Adnyamathanha culture, and sustainable access across a large and remote area with minimal infrastructure.





Theme 1: Shared Journey

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park sits within a network of protected areas across Adnyamathanha country which intersect with pastoral properties, much of which is managed and controlled by Adnyamathanha people. The stories of the Adnyamathanha people and pastoralists entwine through colonial settlement, pastoral occupation and into ongoing park management.

Nepabunna is a small township located adjacent to the park's south-east corner whose residents are Adnyamathanha people. Nantawarrina, located along the park's southern boundary, was a former pastoral lease that became Australia's first Indigenous Protected Area in 1998. It is now managed by Nipapanha Community Incorporated. Mount Serle is a pastoral lease to the west of Nepabunna. The lease is held by an Adnyamathanha organisation and Adnyamathanha people reside on and work the property. These properties are contiguous with the park, providing important habitat links which support ecological sustainability and resilience.

Adnyamathanha people have never ceded sovereignty of their lands. When European settlers first arrived at the northern Flinders Ranges in the 1940's they brought in new diseases, relocated Adnyamathanha people and took possession of their land and water supplies. Despite their dispossession and hardships since colonial occupation, Adnyamathanha people have maintained a strong connection to Country and their continued involvement in park management today is integral to keeping Country and culture healthy.

The park has been at the forefront of Aboriginal ranger programs and was the first place to support a traditional owner training program. Government partnerships with traditional owners have created positive outcomes for culture and biodiversity conservation in the area for decades. In the 1960's National Parks and Wildlife staff sought support from the Nepabunna community for the dedication of the park, starting the first discussions of Adnyamathanha participation in the park's management. When the Balcanooga block was added to the park in 1982 a training program for Aboriginal rangers from the local community was established through Federal Government funding, and parks staff were based on site. In 2003 the park was co-named to include 'Vulkathunha' in the title in recognition of the Adnyamathanha people being the traditional owners of the land comprising the park. In 2005 the park was one of the first reserves in South Australia to be co-managed.

The cultural beliefs and practices of the Adnyamathanha people associated with birth, death, ceremonies, social interaction, hunting, harvesting, camping and travelling all derive from Yura Muda. There are also many features of the landscape as well as archaeological, spiritual and cultural sites that are linked to Yura Muda and are very important to Adnyamathanha people. Such places are often landscape features: trees, sand dunes, waterholes and salt lakes. Knowledge of these places is passed down from generation to generation as part of Adnyamathanha oral tradition.

Many places in the park relate to these traditional stories, after which landscape features are named. The park also contains a number of places of special significance and visiting these Munda or dangerous/prohibited places may be restricted unless accompanied by Adnyamathanha guides. The Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Co-management Board will provide guidance on these matters and ensure visitor information material explains the need for any restrictions on public access.

All Aboriginal sites, objects, and remains are protected from damage, disturbance or interference by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*, regardless of whether they have been registered or reported. There are many sites and landscape

features distributed throughout the park, some of which are not known or recorded. The integrity of many sites has been compromised by past land use. Surveys and appropriate cultural knowledge are required to ensure that management activities such as trail development or prescribed burning do not impact on sites and features.

The heritage values of the park include relics from previous post-colonisation land uses and management, particularly the pastoral and mining industries from the mid-nineteenth century. The Adnyamathanha people were active participants throughout and undertook much of the construction and subsequent operation of this infrastructure, maintaining their involvement right through

The eagle, crows and magpies

Wildu the eagle had two nephews Wakarla the crow and Wurrakurli the magpie.

The crows and magpies, like all of the birds were originally white. Wildu enjoyed a number of privileges not available to his nephews. Wildu made sure they were aware of his privileged position by constantly reminding them and his bossiness annoyed them.

Finally the nephews decided to get rid of Wildu. They built a nest resembling that of his favourite food the Stick-nest rat (urli). When the nest was finished they stuck sharp kangaroo bone needles (vaya) in it.

Wildu normally hunted stick-nest rats by hitting their nests with his throwing stick (wirri) until they came out. This time no rats appeared. The nephews suggested another way of frightening the rats out of their nest would be to jump on it.

When Wildu jumped on the nest the sharp kangaroo bone needles pierced his feet. Wakarla and Wurrakurli called all of the other birds together to hold a corroboree to celebrate their success. The injured Wildu flew to a large hill nearby but the birds shouted insults at him and he flew away and eventually collapsed.

Meanwhile Wildu's wives became worried and began to search for him. When they finally found his body, his feathers were scattered all around and they had to collect them and stick them back on. They then blew into his mouth and onto his body until he came back to life.

As Wildu flew off with his wives he shouted angrily that he would seek a revenge for his injury. When he returned to the hill overlooking the corroboree ground the other birds were still dancing and laughing about the nephew's trick.

Wildu stirred up a great storm. As it raged the birds sought refuge in a cave. When the birds were all inside Wildu built a great fire at the entrance. As the fire took hold the birds began to escape.

The first out were the corellas. They were relatively unscathed by the flames. Next came the magpies and willie wagtails. They were burnt in patches. Finally the crows escaped but not before they were blackened all over.

Satisfied that he had got his revenge Wildu flew away to the north with his wives.



to present times. The Bolla Bollana Brick Kiln and Copper Smelter Ruins Site is a State Heritage Place, entered in the South Australian Heritage Register and is protected under the *Heritage Places Act 1993*. As a State Heritage place, any development that may impact the site must be done in accordance with the *Heritage Places Act 1993*, the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016* and the *Planning and Design Code*. Other heritage sites identified include buildings, mines, smelters, shepherds huts, water supply infrastructure and plantings.

The park's geological values make for spectacular viewing. The major elevated and rugged landscape features have formed by the squeezing, folding and uplifting and erosion of part of an extensive fold belt of sedimentary rocks known as the Adelaide Geosyncline. Around 650 million years ago geological successions record warmer interglacial conditions with an ancient barrier reef forming, seen in the outcropping rocks of the Oodnaminta Reef located in the Arkaroola Protection Area and Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park. The rocks and landform of the Gammon Ranges consist predominantly of quartzite, with coatings of limestone and shale seen in the valleys, and siltstones, limestones and glacial deposits exposed where the quartzite has eroded over many millions of years. The geological and geomorphological story, involving fossils, structures, stratigraphy and mineralogy links to the park's mining history, and the stories and culture of the Adnyamathanha people.

Many plant and animal species exist within the Gammon Ranges at the limit of their geographical range, maintaining viable populations in the comparatively moist habitat of the Ranges compared with the surrounding plains. Ecologically significant species such as the large-flower groundsel (*Senecio megaglossus*), spidery wattle (*Acacia araneosa*) and slender bell-fruit (*Codonocarpus pyramidalis*) are listed as vulnerable under the EPBC Act. The vegetation appears to have strong affinities to the underlying geology, indicated by some dominant species being found only in particular areas. Due to colonial settlement, many small to medium mammals and some reptiles became locally extinct by 1900. Surviving species in the park today include the nationally vulnerable Andu (yellow-footed rock-wallaby), the narrow-nosed planigale (*Planigale tenuirostris*), the fat tailed dunnart (*Sminthopsis crassicaudata*) and the stripe-faced dunnart (*Sminthopsis macroura*).

Balcanoona Creek is entirely captured within the park, from high up in the catchment where the stream moves quickly down rocky hills to the plains, where the creek moves more slowly across more sandy sediments until it empties into Lake Frome. Protecting this contained complex is a priority.

The free flowing springs and watercourses within the park are critical to the survival of animals, especially during droughts, but also provide habitat for some unique plants and animals, particularly native freshwater fish.

The plants, animals and landscape features across Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park are of great significance to the Adnyamathanha people. Muda stories and song-lines cross the area and numerous sites of cultural significance occur within the park. Many of the plant and animal species that were originally found in the park, including the Yarpu (bilby) (*Macrotis lagotis*), Andu (yellow-footed rock-wallaby), Idnya (western quoll), Urli (stick-nest rat) (*Leporillus sp.*) and Mudlu (carpet python) (*Morelia spilota*) are of special personal significance to Adnyamathanha people for whom they are Mukunha (a form of totem connected by a piece of land).

The *Bounceback* program has been operating across the semi-arid northern Flinders Ranges landscape for more than 30 years, with Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park a key site for ecological restoration works. The program aims to restore and secure healthy and resilient ecosystems and has significantly reduced threats from introduced animals, pest plants and total grazing pressure in both the park and neighbouring properties. *Bounceback* has established a strong foundation for biodiversity conservation, resulting in regenerating native vegetation communities, a significant increase in numbers of Andu (yellow-footed rock-wallaby), and gradual recovery of other regionally rare fauna such as echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeatus*), short-tailed grasswren (*Amytornis merrotsyi merrotsyi*) and Mudlu (carpet python). In 2022 Idnya (western quoll) were reintroduced into the park and monitoring has shown that they are spreading into areas beyond the original reintroduction sites. A key component of the program's success has been the application of a collaborative approach involving Traditional Owners, park neighbours, government and volunteers such as the Sporting Shooters Association of Australia.

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park is one of the few known sites for nationally vulnerable Wirta Udla Yarri (Flinders Ranges purple-spotted gudgeon) populations, which are endemic to Weetootla Spring and another spring near the park. The *Bounceback* program is supporting a translocation program for the EPBC Act-listed species aiming to re-establish populations sites in Ikara-Flinders Ranges National Park and the Yappala Indigenous Protected Area. In 2021, 600 Wirta Udla Yarri were relocated to permanent springs at the two new sites, with monitoring at both sites indicating that fish are surviving and breeding, with young fish being recorded.

Objectives

Celebrate and conserve Adnyamathanha continuous culture and connection to Country.

Recognise the shared history between Adnyamathanha people and pastoralists by supporting ongoing partnerships with the community to protect and promote park values.

Strategies

- Continue and encourage partnerships and collaboration with the Adnyamathanha community and surrounding land managers to support park management actions which are consistent with regional priorities to achieve ecological outcomes and strengthen cultural connections across boundaries.
- Maintain strong relationships between Department for Environment and Water staff and the Board to achieve effective and appropriate management of the park and the preservation of Adnyamathanha culture.
- In partnership with Adnyamathanha, ensure sites that are significant to the culture and heritage of Adnyamathanha people are managed appropriately for their protection.
- Continue to share the science behind park management, including the important plants and animals found in the area, ecological processes, significant geological and geomorphological features and what the land looked like prior to colonisation.
- Continue to collaborate with key partners of the *Bounceback* program and support new partnership opportunities to improve ecosystem health and provide cultural outcomes for Adnyamathanha people.
- Share Adnyamathanha culture and heritage with visitors and reinforce the importance of connection to Country for the spiritual health of Adnyamathanha people.





Theme 2: Working together

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park is a special place rich in cultural and spiritual significance to the Adnyamathanha people, with wild and rugged landscapes supporting biodiversity, and a variety of opportunities for visitors to explore and experience nature in a remote outback setting. For people that work directly in caring for the park, developing and maintaining cooperative relationships is considered essential to achieving an integrated approach to caring for Country.

Adnyamathanha rangers have been integral to successful park management and strong community partnerships since 1982, when the first local Aboriginal ranger training program was established. Supporting and expanding development opportunities for Adnyamathanha rangers acknowledges their expertise and knowledge in caring for Country. Partnering with subject matter experts to undertake scientific research and provide on-the-job training will further build the capacity and skills of Adnyamathanha rangers.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Department for Environment and Water and the Nantawarrina IPA helps to support collaborative partnerships with Adnyamathanha people and ensures integrated biodiversity and cultural outcomes across the Northern Flinders Ranges. This partnership focuses on habitat restoration, species recovery, pest control, cultural heritage management and other park management activities within the park (and Ikara–Flinders Ranges

National Park) and the Nantawarrina IPA. The MOU also aims to promote training and employment opportunities for Nantawarrina IPA Rangers while strengthening co-management and community involvement.

Co-management recognises that Adnyamathanha traditional knowledge and land management practices must inform park management to guide the interactions of ecosystems, culture, heritage and recreation. Using traditional knowledge as well as scientific knowledge will improve understanding of the park and its threats to inform best practice management strategies. Cultural knowledge about plants, animals, traditional practices, sites and stories is the intellectual property of the Adnyamathanha people and its communication to the broader community is subject to cultural protocols and the consent of the appropriate Adnyamathanha people.

Maintaining connection to Country includes the sustainable use of natural resources, such as traditional food, medicine, and hunting and fishing on the land and water. Adnyamathanha people may occasionally want to pick native fruits or gather plant materials from the park. Such traditional uses are acceptable, provided they are culturally appropriate, ecologically sustainable, and harvested in accordance with any permissions and conditions as set by the Board. If evidence suggests ecological benefits from traditional harvesting practices, consideration should be given to incorporating these practices into future vegetation management.

Volunteers make a significant contribution to biodiversity and heritage conservation, the collection of knowledge and promoting park values to visitors. The Friends of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park have been active in the park since 2001 conducting activities such as wildlife monitoring, plant and animal surveys, revegetation, developing interpretative and educational materials, trail development and historical building refurbishment. In collaboration with rangers and the Adnyamathanha community, the group has been instrumental in restoring the Oocaboolina Outstation, monitoring Andu (yellow-footed rock wallaby) and Idnya (western quoll) numbers for *Bounceback* reintroduction and habitat restoration programs and creating plant and animal educational materials including both Adnyamathanha and European names.

Introduced animals including cats (*Felis catus*), foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*) and goats (*Capra hircus*) are present across the northern Flinders Ranges and are known to occur in the park. For more than 20 years broad scale and regular baiting across the park and into neighbouring properties has kept fox numbers low. Aerial fox baiting in previously inaccessible sites and goat control programs have been supported through the *Bounceback* program. Effective fox and goat control programs, combined with favourable rainfall is attributed to the recovery of numerous plant and animal species, and the spread of Andu (yellow-footed rock-wallaby) populations into new locations within the park. However, even in low numbers introduced animals can have significant impacts on biodiversity and will require ongoing management to minimise their impact on native species. Continued efforts to control cats, foxes and goats are required to see Idnya (western quoll) successfully established in the park and to support ecosystem health.

Mustering goats is used in ongoing control operations. From time-to-time horses are brought into the park, mainly to support goat-mustering activities and tourist rides, subject to the appropriate approvals. Provided that any associated environmental impacts remain minimal, that arrangement will continue. However, prolonged de-pasturing of horses in the park should not occur and the length of time they spend in the park should be kept to a minimum.

Urdlu (red kangaroo) (*Osphranter rufus*), Wawu (western grey) (*Macropus fuliginosus*) and Mandya (euro) (*Macropus robustus*) populations have been known to increase to unsustainable levels due to the control of the Urdninyi (dingo), the absence of traditional hunting of kangaroos, and the creation of additional water sources. Total grazing pressure from kangaroos, rabbits and goats has had a detrimental impact on the park's habitat quality and food availability for important and threatened species and can cause damage to cultural sites.

Evidence of total grazing pressure will be used where required to determine impacts to habitat quality and cultural sites by native and introduced herbivores. While managing the impacts of herbivores will primarily focus on the control of introduced herbivores, where evidence indicates that Urdlu (red kangaroos), Wawu (western grey kangaroos), and Mandya (euros) are a large contributing factor to total grazing pressure resulting in unsustainable impacts to park values, strategic management will be considered. Where non-lethal methods are considered ineffective or not feasible, culling will be implemented as it remains the only practicable method of management. Kangaroo management programs will be planned in conjunction with the Adnyamathanha community to ensure that their interests are accommodated and may also consider commercial options for the utilisation of carcasses.

Many pest plant species have spread across the park due to historic land clearing and livestock grazing. Pest plant species that have the potential to spread such as buffel grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) will be monitored, and control will be implemented to protect areas of high biodiversity and cultural value, and where pest plants threaten the survival of threatened flora populations.

Fire is a fundamental element of the northern Flinders Ranges ecosystem. Carefully managed fire can assist in the recovery of ecological communities, protect assets against wildfire, and help manage introduced species. For example, planned burning can create long-term habitat for species such as the nationally vulnerable short-tailed grasswren and reduce the encroachment of introduced species on the fire-dependent spinifex (*Triodia sp.*) hummock grasslands that short-tailed grasswren populations exclusively occupy.

The *Northern Flinders Ranges Fire Management Plan 2016* and future updated fire management plans, guide fire management in the park and across the northern Flinders Ranges area. The plan includes strategies to minimise risks to life, property and the environment. It will also help to support the resumption of traditional burning practices and the healing of Country.

With the exception of the most elevated peaks, the climate of the northern Flinders Ranges is predominantly continental and arid. In this region, the majority of the rainfall occurs in the warmer months. The sources of precipitation are mainly late spring and summer thunderstorms and those more infrequent, but extended periods, when tropical cyclones become rain depressions and push further south than usual. Because of the unpredictable timing and pattern of rainfall, drought conditions are common in the Gammon Ranges region. Climate change projections for the region indicate increasing temperatures, declining rainfall, and increased time under drought conditions.



These changing conditions are likely to exacerbate threatening processes such as predation by pest animals and invasion by introduced plants and reduce the availability of suitable refuge habitat during harsh climatic conditions, particularly for species dependent on permanent or semi-permanent water supplies. Understanding the potential impacts and how to support ecosystems to be resilient will be crucial in successful long-term park management. The impacts of climate change on cultural and recreational values also needs to be considered. Research and monitoring are vital in developing an understanding of climate change impacts and implementing programs to mitigate them.

The remote and rugged wilderness of Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park make it a popular destination for visitors wanting a spectacular outback experience. Four-wheel driving, camping, bushwalking and birdwatching are popular activities. A network of roads within the park provides access to campsites and other destinations (Figure 1), although some areas are only accessible via four-wheel drive. In addition, some tracks are one-way and may be closed when they are unsuitable for use. Horse riding is permitted on public roads and designated tracks. The continuation of track maintenance and repair is a priority.

Camping is supported at basic designated campgrounds strategically located across the park. The campgrounds have minimal facilities; however toilets and shower facilities are available at Balcanoona. This basic camping supports experienced remote area travellers and bushwalkers looking for an immersive nature experience. Most campsites offer access to walking trails, which include unmarked and multi-day walks. The Italowie Gap, Ithala Awi campsite is well known for being the best location for seeing Andu (yellow-footed rock-wallaby).

The park includes significant built assets and historic structures with practical, historic or interpretive value.

Restored historic buildings including the Shearers Quarters, Nudlamutana Hut and Grindell's hut are available for accommodation, with facilities designed to meet a range of visitor needs. Grindell's hut is the site of an artist's residency program run once per year by Country Arts SA with support from rangers. Restoration and alteration of historic buildings may be considered in consultation with Heritage SA of the Department for Environment and Water and with development approval issued by the State Commission Assessment Panel. Any new structures and changes impacting State Heritage Places within the park must maintain the heritage values of the Place, and encourage the ongoing use and building maintenance supporting long-term park operations. Park assets and structures are owned and maintained by the South Australian Government and set aside to support park operations and may not be suitable for commercial or recreational use.

Existing infrastructure and visitor facilities will be maintained, and new facilities may be developed in future if the level of demand warrants the investment. The authorisation of any new tourism activities or the development of new facilities such as walking trails will be assessed by traditional owners and risk assessments will be required to ensure that cultural sites and biodiversity values are not compromised. Depending on the nature of the site, specific visitor access policies may be required. These policies may enable unrestricted public access or facilitate access through an Adnyamathanha guide.

All proposals for tourist accommodation, commercial ventures and other new visitor experiences associated with activities such as scenic flights, walking, cycling, and horse riding within the park will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Any built infrastructure may require approval under the *Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016*. Each proposal will be assessed to ensure that it is compatible with park values and the aspirations of the Adnyamathanha traditional owners.

Objectives

Support Adnyamathanha culture and heritage through co-management, keeping Country healthy, continuation of traditional cultural practices and protecting all aspects of the Adnyamathanha cultural landscape.

Provide exceptional and inclusive visitor experiences and support opportunities for ecologically sustainable tourism in a way that enables visitors to develop a deeper appreciation and respect for Adnyamathanha spirit and culture across the landscape and an understanding of what the park protects.

Strategies

- Inform park management strategies and practices through cultural heritage research and the exchange of appropriate cultural heritage information.
- Incorporate traditional ecological knowledge in park management and threat abatement programs to support cross-cultural learning and assist with the use and transfer of traditional knowledge.
- Control pest plants and animals to limit their impact on biodiversity and where their control can support the recovery of threatened species and establishment of reintroduced native species such as Idnya (western quoll). Work in partnership with Traditional owners, neighbours and stakeholders and contribute to landscape-scale control programs for effective outcomes.
- Support monitoring and research projects to inform future management that build ecosystem resilience and protects cultural and recreational values from the impacts of climate change.
- Where evidence indicates that impacts from native wildlife, including the western grey kangaroo, red kangaroo and euro, is unsustainable and impacting park conservation values, implement management programs in conjunction with Adnyamathanha people.
- Continue and encourage partnerships and collaboration with Adnyamathanha, the SA Arid Lands Landscape Board, land managers, researchers, environmental groups, and volunteers to achieve ecological outcomes, cultural heritage protection and foster community stewardship of the parks.
- Refer to actions identified in recovery plans and conservation advice statements for species listed under the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* to prevent further decline or extinction and to support their recovery.
- Monitor the condition of State Heritage listed sites and undertake essential maintenance and restoration work where appropriate and in liaison with Heritage SA. Where required, develop specific policies for sites that are at risk of damage, disturbance, or inappropriate access by park visitors. Support appropriate volunteer contribution to restoration works.
- Manage, maintain and improve visitor facilities for the provision of quality experiences. Consider upgrades and new facilities, to meet visitor needs and encourage new and repeat visitors. Provide inclusive access and experiences for all abilities where possible.
- Provide information to park visitors communicating the importance of the park to Adnyamathanha people as a place to care for Country, undertake traditional activities and for the protection of Adnyamathanha culture and heritage.



Theme 3: Creating a strong future

Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park encompasses Country that has connected people, places and nature for tens of thousands of years, and will continue to provide important connections for years to come. Adnyamathanha people welcome visitors to their Country to enjoy the experiences it has to offer and encourage visitors to respect the Country and Adnyamathanha culture for future generations. Park management will continue to prioritise experiences which grow connections, improve park values and keep culture and Country healthy.

Adnyamathanha people aspire for visitors to embrace the spirit of Adnyamathanha Country and understand what makes Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park a special place, both before they visit and when they leave the park. Appropriately and respectfully sharing Adnyamathanha knowledge and information with visitors will enhance their visit to the park through education, encourage behaviour protective of park values and support visitor safety. Existing experiences in the park which share and celebrate Adnyamathanha culture, such as Uncle Gil's Walk, may be enhanced with respect for traditional lore and customs, and new experiences will be considered. Opportunities to create a more immersive experience for visitors and partnerships with education and tourism providers will be encouraged.

Signposting and informative and interpretive materials will incorporate traditional Adnyamathanha place names where this is culturally acceptable, as determined in consultation with the Adnyamathanha community. Interpretive information may be used to acknowledge important sites and people, promote Aboriginal culture and connect visitors emotionally to the park. Sites across the park have been dual named using both the Adnyamathanha and European name and this work will continue to bring more Adnyamathanha place names back to the park.

The park holds a wealth of archaeological and anthropological sites of profound cultural significance for Adnyamathanha people. The Munyi Rock Art Site is a particularly significant cultural site requiring ongoing protection. Further research of this site in collaboration with Adnyamathanha rangers will inform future management and protection efforts, which may include closing existing tracks. The Board will also set management strategies and site-specific policies to protect cultural sites, determine public access, and ensure any visitation is culturally appropriate.

Protecting and interpreting significant sites and providing enriching cultural experiences for visitors continues to be a high priority for management. While there are numerous culturally significant sites recorded in the park, further research needs to be undertaken to identify and



appropriately record any additional significant sites and support cultural heritage management.

The Vulkathunha component part of the Flinders Ranges World Heritage nomination, which includes the rhythmites of the Elatina Formation, is critical to the understanding of the geological history of Earth before and during the dawn of animal life. The rhythmites exposed in Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park record a world where the days and years were longer and an environment that was at sea level and close to the equator. These conditions provided the precursor to the rise of eukaryotes, providing the foundation for animal life. The component part also contains an important Adnyamathanha cultural site with access permitted only at the discretion of the Board. Together with other component parts across the Flinders Ranges, this area helps present a geological record of Earth's wildly fluctuating climate conditions and environments over a period of over 350 million years, illustrating how complex animal life evolved on our planet.

The World Heritage listing provides the opportunity to celebrate the importance of this park and the geological features it protects on a global scale. Promoting the park's contribution to the Flinders Ranges World Heritage values will be done in consultation with the Board. Interpretive material will be developed and installed at central locations such as the Balcanoona precinct.

Maintaining and building on partnerships across boundaries, between communities, land managers, conservation groups and the Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges Co-management Board achieves broad scale impacts across the landscape and supports Adnyamathanha people in keeping their Country healthy. Partnerships with outside organisations such as FAME (Foundation for Australia's Most Endangered Species Inc.) will continue to be a key component in delivering threat abatement work to maintain habitat refuges and provide safe havens supporting species reintroductions.

Co-management is an important step in reconciliation and recognises that supporting Adnyamathanha spiritual, cultural and social practices is critically important for wellbeing and strengthening and protecting Adnyamathanha relationship with Country. Re-establishing traditional management practices and supporting two-way learning while building the resilience of Country will help to meet biodiversity conservation goals, create employment opportunities on Country and support Adnyamathanha aspirations for handback. The Cultural Use Zone provides an area for Adnyamathanha to undertake traditional practices and may be considered by the Board as a suitable resting place for Adnyamathanha and the repatriation of ancestral remains.



Objective

Support the future of park management by building on collaborative partnerships, protecting the park's significant cultural, ecological and geological values, honouring Adnyamathanha connection to Country and encouraging a greater understanding of the park.

Strategies

- Work with Adnyamathanha people, the tourism industry and the local community to develop and enhance visitor experiences and provide economic benefit for Adnyamathanha and the local community.
- Partner with the Adnyamathanha community and appropriate research institutions to support identification, cultural surveys, recording of significant sites and research which aims to increase site specific knowledge and apply to management practices to mitigate adverse impacts to sites. Where required, develop specific policies for sites that are at risk of damage, disturbance, or inappropriate access by park visitors.
- Subject to the consent and input of the appropriate Adnyamathanha Traditional Owners, include Adnyamathanha culture, heritage, and design elements in park facilities and interpretation material and continue the practice of dual naming for key sites. Review current signage and investigate areas where new signage may be installed at key visitor touch points such as the western park entry from Nepabunna and the airstrip.
- Support the Flinders Ranges World Heritage nomination process and should the property be inscribed on the World Heritage List, communicate the importance of the site to visitors.
- Provide for the protection of the Munyi Rock Art Site and any other significant sites should they become vulnerable to threatening processes. This may include restricting access by closing tracks or trails, or erecting barriers.
- Facilitate and support Adnyamathanha people to pursue business opportunities and participate in training skill development activities, employment, volunteering and the contracting of park management services.
- Investigate enhancements to the Balcanoona precinct, and other historic structures including a focus on welcoming people to Adnyamathanha Country and providing interpretive and informative material.
- Develop interpretive material as guided by an interpretation plan, which links elements of the park's cultural landscape, natural values, and significant geological and paleontological features with consistent messaging to enhance the visitor experience.
- Continue to monitor visitor impacts to the park, particularly in areas of ecological, cultural and historical importance. Develop strategies to mitigate any adverse impacts.
- Investigate opportunities to further promote the park and encourage longer visitor stays with visitor experiences such as seasonal ranger-guided walks and other suitable low-impact immersive events.
- Manage the Cultural Use Zone to ensure activities such as traditional hunting and gathering is done in accordance with the provisions of this plan and any other provisions as set by the Board. This may include the development and use of policies and protocols to ensure traditional hunting and gathering practices have a minimal impact on the park and do not threaten species at risk.

Invitation to contribute

The Vulkathunha-Gammon Ranges National Park Draft Management Plan has been released for public consultation to facilitate community input into the management of this park.

You are invited to contribute by making a written submission. Please consider the points below when drafting your submission to help ensure that it is effective:

- Make your submission concise and clear
- Reference any specific comments to a page or section within the draft plan
- Identify aspects of the draft plan that you support, or do not support. Explain your reasons for disagreeing with the content of the draft plan and suggest alternatives
- Highlight any information that may be inaccurate and provide a reference to assist with further editing.

Please note that your submission will become part of the public record and will be available to anyone who requests a copy unless you specifically request otherwise.

After all submissions received have been carefully considered, a final park management plan will be prepared and forwarded to the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water for consideration together with a detailed analysis of submissions received.

You can submit your comments via post, email or online using the details provided.

Submissions close at 5pm on XX 20XX

Written submissions:

Protected Area Policy
Department for Environment and Water
GPO Box 1047 ADELAIDE SA 5001

E-mail submissions:

DEWProtectedAreaManagement@sa.gov.au

Online submissions: [Yoursay.sa.gov.au](https://yoursay.sa.gov.au)









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For further information please contact:

Department for Environment and Water. Phone Information Line (08) 8204 1910, or see SA White Pages for your local Department for Environment and Water office.



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