

Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park

Management Plan 2017



Minister's foreword

Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park is a unique and special dreaming place of rich cultural and archaeological history situated along the banks of the Murray River. It was created to conserve and protect the heritage of the Nganguraku people, the traditional custodians of this sacred land.

Ngaut Nguat Conservation Park is a place for celebrating Nganguraku culture. The park is renowned for its magnificent cliff face which preserves significant Aboriginal engravings, petroglyphs and artefacts that have contributed to an understanding of Australia's history.

The park is cooperatively managed by the Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Co-management Board – a partnership between Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Incorporated (MACAI) and the South Australian Government.

The park supports a thriving tourism business owned and operated by MACAI, offering Murray River cruisers the opportunity to experience guided cultural tours of the fascinating cliff complex. Groups of school children have also enjoyed enriching educational trips to the park for many years.

This plan sets out objectives and strategies, outlining how the park's highly significant cultural site will be protected in the long term and how its unique tourism experience can be further enhanced into the future.

I commend the hard work that has been undertaken by MACAI and the Co-management Board in the development of this plan and in the ongoing management of the park.

It is with much pleasure that I formally adopt the Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Management Plan under section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.



The Hon Ian Hunter MLC

Minister for Sustainability,
Environment and Conservation

Cultural Sensitivity Warning

Aboriginal people are warned that this publication may contain images of deceased persons or culturally sensitive material.





Developing this plan

The Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Management Plan has been developed by the Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Co-management Board. It tells the story of the Nganguraku people - the custodians of Ngaut Ngaut, who have occupied, enjoyed, and cared for this area for generations, and are forever tied to this sacred land. This plan recognises that Ngaut Ngaut is a dreaming place, which is home to the footprints, engravings, and memories of the 'old people' that lived in, protected, and shared this special place.



National Parks
South Australia



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Directions for management

Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park is proclaimed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. This provides the park with a high level of protection and ensures that it is managed for conservation as well as appropriate recreational and tourism activities.

Currently the park is managed by the Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Co-management Board (the Board) – a partnership between Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Incorporated (MACAI) and the South Australian Government. MACAI comprises some of the Nganguraku people, the traditional custodians of the land. This partnership ensures that the land management skills and knowledge of the Nganguraku people are complemented by those of the South Australian Government.

MACAI manage day to day activities in the park and operate a tourism enterprise through a commercial tour operator licence. MACAI also hold a lease for the ranger cottage and a lease for an area of the park where they have a vision to develop an interpretive centre in the future.

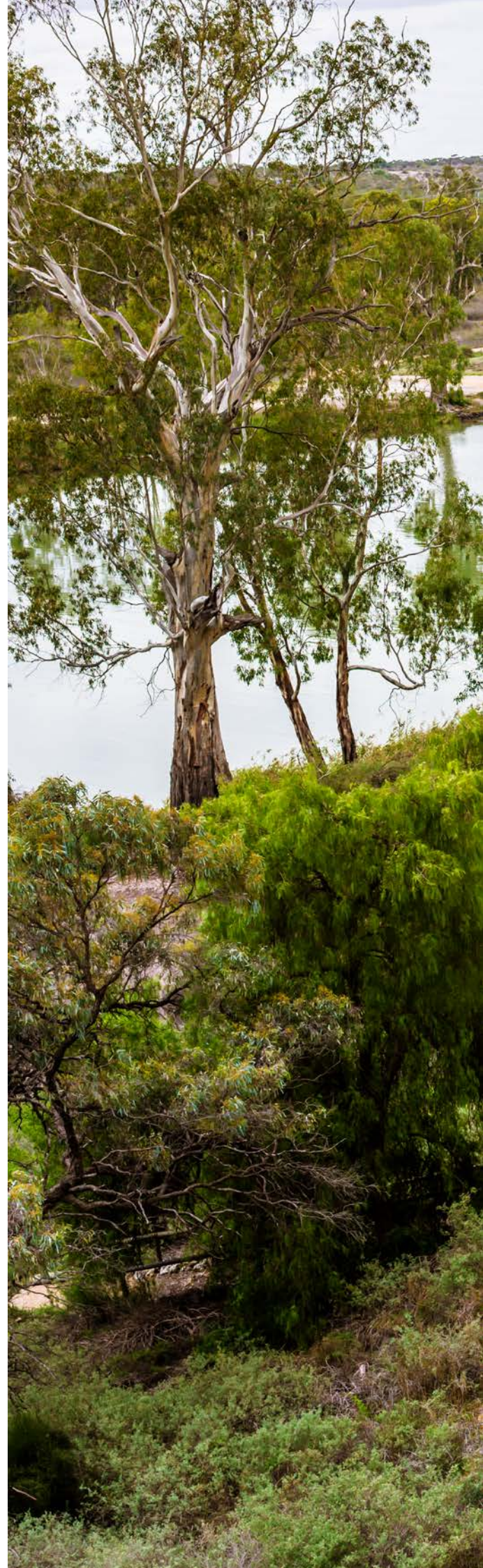
The Nganguraku people aspire to maintain Ngaut Ngaut as a conservation park and continue sharing it with the community, while also achieving greater autonomy over their Country. To this end, the South Australian Government is working alongside MACAI towards the future constitution of the park as an Aboriginal-owned, co-managed park pursuant to the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.

***‘Ngaut Ngaut is part of my heritage and culture.
We have to preserve it for future generations. My life
would be empty without my connection to this place.’***

Isobelle Campbell,
Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Co-Management Board

This plan directs management of Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park. It replaces the previous Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Management Plan, which was adopted in 2008.

The plan will be implemented by the Board in partnership with the South Australian Government, MACAI, park neighbours, technical specialists and stakeholders. It will be implemented in accordance with the relevant provisions of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*.







Park significance and purpose

Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park is a small area of 49 hectares situated adjacent to the River Murray, approximately 100 km north east of Adelaide (Figure 1). The park is centred on a large Aboriginal cultural site comprised of extensive engravings within a limestone cliff complex. This cliff complex intersects an area of remnant Mallee woodland above, with the River Murray and its floodplain below.

The riverbank and narrow floodplain within Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park feature Red Gum and River Box woodland, a highly important component of the riverine ecosystem which provides habitat for many species of mammals, reptiles, birds and invertebrates. The nationally vulnerable Southern bell frog inhabits the wet fringes of the river, while the State rare common brushtail possum and the nationally vulnerable Regent parrot utilise hollows in the Red Gums and River Box for shelter.

Ngaut Ngaut is a place of great cultural significance that is tied to the Dreaming. It is where the 'old people' lived and left their mark. Their culture is passed on at Ngaut Ngaut, through stories, memories, engravings and the objects left behind.

Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park was established as a place for learning about Aboriginal culture by the late Richard Hunter, former chair of MACAI.

Ngaut Ngaut is an ancestral being. Beliefs and Dreaming stories about Ngaut Ngaut are complex and at times Ngaut Ngaut is described as either a man or a woman. People in the Aboriginal community today also refer to Ngaut Ngaut as a demon or a fire demon.

Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Incorporated (2012)

The park supports a thriving tourism business which continues to be operated by MACAI. This tourism business interprets the site for visitors, educating people about local Aboriginal culture. This sharing of knowledge ensures greater protection of the site and enables Nganguraku people to strengthen and celebrate their culture.

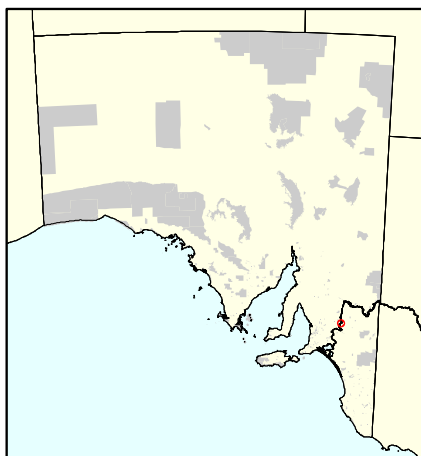
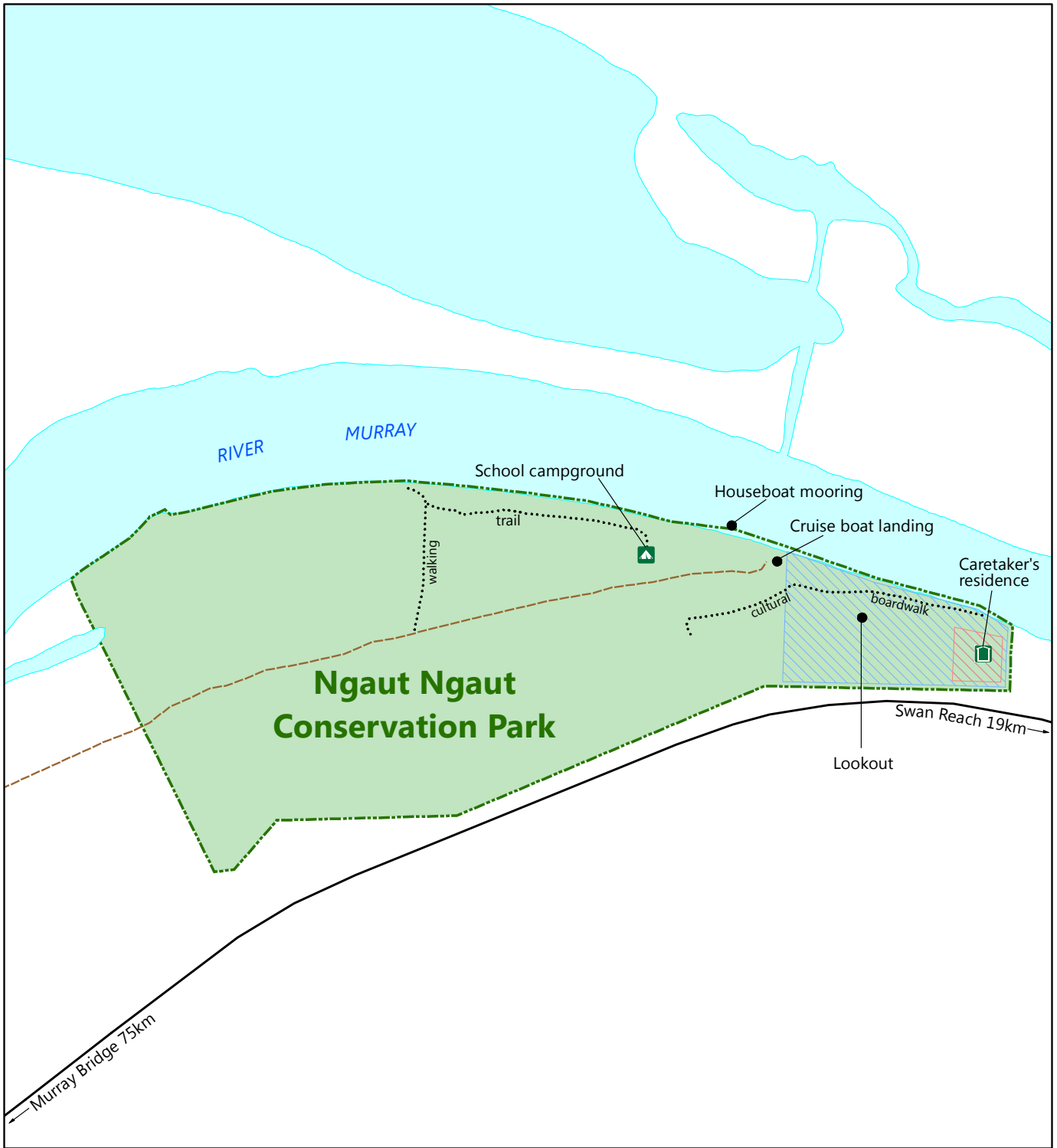


Figure 1
Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park



0m 200 400

A scale bar indicating distances in meters, with markings at 0, 200, and 400 meters.

LEGEND

- Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park
- Guided Access Zone
- Caretaker's Lease
- Campground
- Caretaker's Residence
- Sealed Road
- Management Track
- Walking Trail or Boardwalk
- Waterbody



What are we looking after?

Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park protects:

- A complex of cultural sites and artefacts that are of profound significance to the Nganguraku people.
- A place of learning where Nganguraku people can share their culture and knowledge with visitors.
- A significant and unique tourist attraction that provides financial assistance for management of the park, contributes to the local economy, and creates employment opportunities for traditional owners.
- Petroglyphs and artefacts that have contributed to an understanding of Australia's pre European history.
- The first archaeological excavations of a stratified rock shelter undertaken in Australia.
- A small but important component of the Murray River ecosystem which conserves native vegetation such as the State rare wetland shrub, purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*).
- Habitat for a number of fauna species that are listed as rare or threatened under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972* and/or the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. These include the Regent Parrot (*Polytelis anthoepus monarchoides*), Large-footed Myotis Bat (*Myotis macropus*), Carpet Python (*Morelia spilota ssp Variegata*) and Southern Bell Frog (*Litoria raniformis*).

What are the challenges and opportunities?

- Managing threats from pest plants and herbivores to preserve threatened species and ensure the health of the wider Murray River and floodplain.
- To ensure that the commercial tourism business continues to support MACAI in managing the park.
- Maintaining a secure site to ensure public safety and the protection of cultural sites. This includes managing boat access and ensuring that visitors are aware of the park's significance.
- Improving the standard of facilities and ensuring that visitor information aligns with the park's status, and maximises the interpretation of Aboriginal culture and South Australian history.
- Ensuring that a program is in place to monitor and maintain the boardwalk and associated infrastructure to a safe standard.
- Ensuring that cultural sites and features are not impacted by erosion, visitor activity, or maintenance of infrastructure.
- Understanding and responding to the effects of climate change on the floodplain vegetation and petroglyphs.
- Furthering the opportunity for MACAI to own the land of Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park and to continue managing the park on behalf of all South Australians under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.



Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Incorporated (MACAI) members and Ngaut Ngaut cultural tour guides.



Management themes and priorities

This section of the management plan addresses the most important management issues for the park focussing on two key themes.

Theme 1 – Interpreting and celebrating Nganguraku culture

It was the vision of the late Richard Hunter, former chairperson of MACAI, to establish a tourism enterprise at Ngaut Ngaut that could be conducted by future generations of Nganguraku people. His legacy continues through the guided tours undertaken by his family, and the lasting understanding and respect for Nganguraku culture which is passed on to the park's visitors.

'It is a place intimately tied to our Dreaming, a place where the 'old people' lived and a place that preserves the environment. It is also a place that demonstrates our ongoing connection to our country and provides us with a sense of belonging. Our community values Ngaut Ngaut as a place where we can teach our children about their culture.'

Isobelle Campbell,
Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Co-Management Board

This tourism operation is essential for the protection of the park's cultural and archaeological sites. The cliff complex and boardwalk are within the Guided Access Zone (refer Figure 1). Visitors may only access this zone as part of a guided tour conducted by MACAI. This allows visitors to access this significant site and be provided with culturally appropriate interpretation, while also ensuring its security.

Most visitors access the park via boat, generally as a part of a tour group. Educational groups may access areas outside the Guided Access Zone through prior arrangement with MACAI.

Vehicle access to the park is facilitated via a management track, located on private property. This track is not available for public use.

The condition of the boardwalk has deteriorated over time, and will ultimately require additional maintenance or replacement. MACAI will complete regular safety audits to manage this infrastructure, mitigate visitor risks and continue providing safe visitor experiences.

An assessment of the boardwalk's structural integrity is needed to guide future works and ensure that it is compliant with national standards for the safety of visitors. The repair or maintenance of this facility may provide opportunities to improve visitor experiences and protection for the site, by offering different ways for people to move through the site.

The Nganguraku people aspire to expand their tourism venture by conducting a broader range of tours. Park visitation could be increased in the future by offering alternative tours and services, building an interpretive facility, and improving facilities and infrastructure for people with limited mobility. Establishing public vehicle access to the park will be fundamental for opening these opportunities.



A MACAI cultural tour sharing the Park's sights and stories with visitors from the Murray Princess paddle steamer.

Objective and strategies

Continue to provide high quality cultural tours that help to manage the park and sustain the passion and commitment of the Nganguraku people for their Country.

- Establish welcome to Country signage and improve visitor information on site to ensure that visitors respect the significance of the site and do not access sensitive sites without a guide.
- Investigate opportunities for the development of an on-park facility that provides for interpretation and preservation of Nganguraku culture, tour bookings and the sale of souvenirs.
- Develop MACAI's business capacity to continue conducting tours and interpreting the park's sites. This could include investigating opportunities for professional accreditation.
- Investigate and trial new tourism opportunities including bush tucker experiences, night tours, and tours of the surrounding Sugar Shack wetland.
- Develop a strategic visitor experience plan to guide maintenance and replacement of tourism facilities including the boardwalk. Implement infrastructure improvements and new infrastructure such as public toilets, an interpretive centre, mooring facilities including bollards and a dock, and limited mobility access, as resources allow.
- Conduct an annual assessment of the structural integrity of the boardwalk to identify any immediate works required.
- Conduct regular risk assessments to monitor the risk of rock fall and bank slumping.
- Investigate options to establish legal vehicle access to the beginning of the boardwalk.



Theme 2 – Looking after the park and its cultural sites.

Many of the cultural features within the park have been studied extensively and are recorded in the South Australian Aboriginal Heritage Register. It is likely that there are additional sites that remain undiscovered. All sites and artefacts, whether registered, recorded or unrecorded, are protected by the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1988*.

In 1929, Norman Tindale and Herbert Hale began excavating a rock shelter adjacent to the cliff complex within Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park. Their work uncovered layers of deposits incorporating food remains, burials, tools and the remains of animals. These artefacts together with the rock engravings are an insight into generations past. Radio carbon dating of artefacts undertaken in the 1950s first illustrated the elaborate and ancient culture that had been maintained at the site for over 5000 years. Important artefacts found at this site are displayed at the South Australian Museum.

‘Seeing the Ngaut Ngaut collection at the South Australian Museum made us emotional. In the future we plan to build a keeping place and an interpretive centre at Ngaut Ngaut to look after our artefacts – they are ours to take forward now – they have more meaning when they are on Country.’

Isabelle Campbell, Ivy Campbell and Anita Hunter
Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Co-Management Board

Any heritage works for the site are overseen by MACAI and specialists from Flinders University and the South Australian Museum.

Artefacts and cultural sites within the park require ongoing monitoring and protection. Despite fencing of the cliff complex and the restriction of access to guided tours, unauthorised access to the cliff complex has historically been a problem. This presents a risk to the site and requires active management.

The park also protects remnant areas of Mallee woodland and floodplain vegetation. These areas are relatively small, yet they are fundamental to the integrity of the site. The natural features of the landscape illustrate the interconnected relationships between the Nganguraku people and the resources on which they depend - the river, wetlands, plants and animals.

The pacific black duck (*Anas superciliosa*) is an example of the inseparable link between Country and Nganguraku culture. The black duck is common in this area and is a totem for the region. Aboriginal people of this region use the word ngatji to describe the duck or simply refer to it as their ‘bird’ (MACAI 2012).

All plants and animals in the park are protected by the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. The introduction and spread of pest plants such as Horehound and Bridal Creeper, as well as grazing by feral herbivores, has the potential to permanently degrade the natural qualities of the park. These threats are managed in a coordinated way across the region as guided by the *Natural Resources SA Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Plan* (South Australian Murray-Darling Basin Natural Resources Management Board (SAMDB NRM) 2015) and Regional Action Plans.



Rare or threatened species are managed as a part of regional programs and in accordance with any existing recovery plans. There are regional and national recovery plans operating, aimed at protecting and restoring populations of Carpet Python, Southern Bell Frog and Regent Parrot that can be found in the park (Schultz 2006; Treilibs 2006; Clemann & Gillespie 2012).

MACAI lease a caretaker's residence within Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park, which maintains a presence in the park to ensure the security of assets at all times (figure 1). The caretaker's lease area is not managed for conservation purposes. It is appropriate, therefore, that special provisions are made for this area, such as allowing for pets and non-native plants.

Objective and strategies

Protect the natural values of the park as a central element of Nganguraku culture.

- Continue to manage the natural values of the park in conjunction with regional conservation and threat abatement programs.
- Monitor the condition of cultural sites and engage specialists to advise and oversee any major heritage conservation works that may be required.
- Ensure security of the cliff complex by improving park infrastructure and preventing unauthorised access.
- As opportunities arise, consider alternative infrastructure location and design to enhance visitor experiences and minimise the risk of damage to the cliff complex and engravings.
- Share traditional and scientific knowledge about the site to improve the skills of those involved in its management.



FALLING
ROCKS



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For further information please contact

Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources phone information line (08) 8204 1910, or see SA White Pages for your local Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resource office.

Photography

All photographs are courtesy of Matt Turner.

Recognition of Aboriginal Culture

Aboriginal Australians have rights to maintain, control, protect and develop their intellectual property over cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions.

Please contact the Mannum Aboriginal Community Association Incorporated to understand these rights in relation to the Ngaut Ngaut Conservation Park Management Plan 2017.



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