

Snowy Mountains SAP Master Plan Aboriginal Stakeholder Consultations

Phase 1 and Phase 2 Consultations Summary Report

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Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Country and pay respects to the Monero Ngarigo people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the land and waters on which the Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct is situated.

We also recognise the continuing living culture of Aboriginal people, and the significance of the Snowy Mountains in that living culture. We recognise the contemporary stories of displacement and the cultural significance of the Snowy Mountains in the continued journey of self-determination in Australia, as well the stories of Country that date back more than 60,000 years.

We acknowledge that Country includes the sky, everything below the ground, and everything between the two: all human and non-human things. All these are equal, interconnected and we recognise these as the ancestors of the Monero Ngarigo people. We recognise that everything done in the Special Activation Precinct impacts Country and the ancestors that are a part of Country.

We acknowledge all the people who have and will contribute their stories and input into the Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct. We recognise the importance of telling the First Story, first. All other stories of place come from and are woven into the First Story.

We acknowledge that the land on which the Snowy Mountains SAP developments stands was, is and always will be Aboriginal land.



'We're nothing without Country.'
Aboriginal resident. Source: David Puls.

Terminology

In this document, wherever possible we have spelt 'Culture' with a capital C when referring to Aboriginal Culture and Cultural practices. This is to acknowledge that Aboriginal Culture is a specific set of practices distinct from the general meaning of the word culture, and includes the intellectual property and knowledge associated with those practices. Australian Aboriginal people identify themselves in various ways; Aboriginal, First Peoples, First Nations, or from the traditional Country that they come from e.g., Ngarigo, Wiradjuri, Bundjalung, etc. Government often uses the term 'Indigenous'. Many Aboriginal people prefer not to be identified as Indigenous. If unsure, it is best to ask the person. All these terms should be capitalised. The term 'Aboriginal' in this document refers to Aboriginal people from Australia. We also use the term 'Indigenous'.

1. Executive summary

This report presents findings and recommendations for inclusion in the Snowy Mountains Special Activation Precinct Master Plan (Master Plan) and in implementation, based on consultation with the Indigenous community in or connected with the Snowy Mountain Special Activation Precinct.

Special Activation Precincts (SAPs) are unique in Regional NSW. They bring together planning and investment to activate business development opportunities.

Objectives and strategic indicators

Objectives and strategic indicators were included in the draft Master Plan to support the Master Plan Vision. There is a specific set of objectives and strategic indicators that relate to the Indigenous community.

Objectives

The following objectives will ensure the Precinct's cultural heritage guides and informs future growth and development.

- Build relationships with Monero Ngarigo Traditional Owners at all stages of development, and in accordance with the NSW Government Architect's Office draft Connecting with Country framework.
- Celebrate Monero Ngarigo Culture, values, and heritage in future development.
- Enable formal Monero Ngarigo participation in Caring for Country, making decisions about Country, contemporary use of natural resources and Cultural knowledge transmission, and protection of key geographical features.
- Foster partnerships between Monero Ngarigo people and relevant agencies to enhance the Aboriginal community's access to Country, and ability to practice Cultural Custodianship.
- Respect Monero Ngarigo people's rights, obligations, roles, and connections to Country as Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways by embedding Aboriginal cultural knowledge in project delivery.
- Agree on what success looks like in terms of the health and wellbeing of Country via the draft Connecting with Country framework.

Strategic indicators

- Build relationships with local Aboriginal communities that incorporate employment and economic development opportunities for local Aboriginal people and businesses at all stages of the project.
- Establish Aboriginal-operated tourism businesses and grow a local Aboriginal business sector that leverages the Precinct's landscape values.
- Identify and celebrate traditional places of importance, including a recognition that many important Indigenous sites were flooded with the creation of Lake Jindabyne.
- Establish targets for the implementation of the Connecting with Country framework including mechanisms for the ongoing participation of Aboriginal people at all stages of the planning process.
- Quantify demand, including the number of Aboriginal people, household structures, housing typologies, locational preferences, and affordability measures.
- Establish targets for dedicated Aboriginal housing that support aspirations to return or remain on Country.
- Areas are available for traditional and contemporary Cultural practices.
- Traditional language and naming are used in consultation with Traditional Owners.

Consultation

The objectives and strategic indicators formed the basis for consultations, along with a broader set of questions about the community's aspirations that might be realised through the investment in the SAP area.



Due to Covid-19, consultations were held online. Community was identified and contacted. Community members were asked for information on who else to contact.

There is dispute as to who are Traditional Owners and who can properly speak for Country, and this impacted on consultations.

Findings

Findings are actions that came out of the initial consultation undertaken in late 2021 and updated with further feedback sought from Aboriginal stakeholders in April 2022. Findings are discussed in more detail in the report but are summarised here through a suggested redraft of the objectives and principles, as follows.

Objectives – suggested redraft

The objectives contained in the draft Snowy Mountains SAP are set out below, **the (yellow) coloured text** is suggested wording for consideration for revision based on the findings and actions in this report:

- Build relationships with Monero Ngarigo Traditional Owners at all stages of development, and in accordance with the NSW Government Architect's Office draft Connecting with Country framework.
- Celebrate Monero Ngarigo Culture, values, and heritage in future **investment and development, including in Cultural assets such as a Cultural Centre.**
- Enable formal Monero Ngarigo participation in Caring for Country, making decisions about Country, contemporary use of natural resources and Cultural knowledge transmission, and protection of key geographical features. **Through Caring for Country promote Indigenous knowledge to heal Country and adapt and mitigate impacts of climate change.**
- Foster partnerships between Monero Ngarigo people and relevant agencies to enhance the Aboriginal community's access to Country, and ability to practice Cultural Custodianship.
- Respect Monero Ngarigo people's rights, obligations, roles and connections to Country as Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways by embedding Aboriginal Cultural knowledge in project delivery
- Agree on what success looks like in terms of the health and wellbeing of Country via the draft Connecting with Country framework.

Strategic indicators – Suggested redraft

The strategic indicators contained in the draft Snowy Mountains SAP draft Master Plan are set out below, with suggested amendments based on the findings and actions in this report.

These indicators can be included as success criteria in the Implementation Plan.

- Build relationships with local Aboriginal communities **and other organisations, including TAFE**, which incorporate **training**, employment and economic development opportunities for local Aboriginal people and businesses at all stages of the project **and through various supply chains.**
- Establish Aboriginal-operated tourism and related businesses and grow a local Aboriginal business sector.
- Identify and celebrate traditional places of importance, including a recognition that many important Indigenous sites were flooded with the creation of Lake Jindabyne.

- Monero Ngarigo Culture is at the forefront of the SAP development. This may include opportunities to showcase Monero Ngarigo Culture through:
 - Welcome to Country
 - Wayfinding
 - Dual naming
 - Architectural integration of Aboriginal perspectives into the build environment
 - Narratives and stories in public access places, such as around Lake Jindabyne
 - Artist opportunities for local Indigenous creatives and artists
- Traditional language and naming are used in consultation with Traditional Owners.
- Investment in infrastructure for a Cultural Centre that may include:
 - A Keeping Place
 - Meeting space
 - Accommodation
 - Education space
- Establish targets for the implementation of the Connecting with Country framework including mechanisms for the ongoing participation of Aboriginal people at all stages of the planning process. Those targets are used for longitudinal measures of the wellness of Country.
- Quantify demand, including the number of Aboriginal people, household structures, housing typologies, locational preferences, and affordability measures.
- Establish targets for dedicated Aboriginal housing that support aspirations to return or remain on Country.
- Areas are available for traditional and contemporary Cultural practices.
- Limit disturbance of new Country in the Kosciuszko National Park in relation to the SAP area and ensure consultation with Traditional Owners in these areas.
- Important sites are protected.
- Explore sources of funding for a Cultural Centre, and ongoing operation of the Cultural Centre, e.g., levy or grants to support Cultural infrastructure, including private investment.

Other findings

Self-determination and speaking for Country

The Indigenous community be supported to engage in a process to determine the Traditional Owners and who can speak for Country. In accordance with self-determination this process should be community lead, with support from the whole of government. Explore this possibility with Snowy Monaro Regional Council, Department of Regional NSW, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Environmental protection

There is concern for the environment, and environmental degradation. The community would like to see environmental degradation addressed through incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices to Care for Country, and by providing employment opportunities to Traditional Owners to Care for Country. There is concern that Country cannot sustain development and the number of tourists.

Significant site – Protection of Porcupine Rocks

Development of a lookout at Porcupine Rocks is halted given the significance of the site.

2. Project context



Special Activation Precincts

Special Activation Precincts (SAPs) are unique in Regional NSW. They bring together planning and investment to activate business development opportunities. The Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (DPIE), in collaboration with the Department of Regional NSW, is developing a 40-year Master Plan for the Snowy Mountains SAP.

The Master Plan

The Snowy Mountains SAP draft Master Plan aspires to grow a one-season visitor destination into a successful year-round destination, by stimulating economic development and investment in Jindabyne and areas of the Kosciuszko National Park, increasing year-round jobs, levelling housing demand and investing in related infrastructure.

When complete, the Master Plan aims to leverage the region's natural beauty and unique climate to improve the tourism amenity of the area to meet the growing needs of permanent residents, seasonal workers, and temporary visitors.

Precincts

The Snowy Mountains SAP is different to other SAPs in that it is a tourism offering and covers several distinct areas, while most SAPs refer to one investigation/precinct area with commercial and industrial land uses at its core.

There are three precincts within the Snowy Mountains SAP. The Jindabyne Catalyst Precinct will be re-zoned under the Activation Precincts SEPP and focus on Jindabyne, guiding development in accommodation, tourism, sports and education in existing and new land releases.

The Jindabyne Growth Precinct will remain under the Snowy River Local Environment Plan 2013 and focus on housing, tourism and industrial development to support the Catalyst Precinct.

The Alpine Precinct will remain under the Alpine SEPP, and guide the development of resorts, camping and other attractions in the Kosciuszko National Park.

Vision and principles

The Snowy Mountain Draft SAP Master Plan Vision is:

The Snowy Mountains is the rooftop of Australia where an unspoiled alpine landscape meets a dramatic climate that is unfound elsewhere on the continent. This is Australia's high country where visitors are drawn to our everchanging seasons, and with them, endless opportunities to experience the great outdoors. The rich culture and authentic character of our region is sewn through the patchwork of local experiences that inspire exploration and provoke adventure.

Sitting under the Vision is a set of principles, linked to strategic indicators:

- Environmental Resilience, focusing on climate change, renewable energy, and environmental management,
- Place and Landscape, focusing on vibrant centres, green streets, the alpine character, and improved connections,
- Connection to Country, focusing on Monero Ngarigo Heritage, return to Country and engagement and education,
- Carrying capacity, focusing on visitor amenity and the extent to which the area can accommodate visitors,
- Housing diversity, including affordability,
- Social infrastructure, including health, education, and community wellbeing,
- Economy and Industry, focusing on year-round tourism, economic resilience, and enhanced visitor experience.
- Transport and Connectivity, and
- Infrastructure and services.

The Connection to Country principle¹

Of the nine principles in the Master Plan the one specifically aimed at providing outcomes for the Indigenous community is the Connecting to Country Principle.

The Connecting with Country Principle has the following objectives and strategic indicators:

Objectives


The following objectives will ensure the Precinct's cultural heritage guides and informs future growth and development:

- Build relationships with Monero Ngarigo Traditional Owners at all stages of development, and in accordance with the NSW Government Architect's Office draft Connecting with Country framework
- Celebrate Monero Ngarigo Culture, values, and heritage in future development
- Enable formal Monero Ngarigo participation in Caring for Country, making decisions about Country, contemporary use of natural resources and Cultural knowledge transmission, and protection of key geographical features
- Foster partnerships between Monero Ngarigo people and relevant agencies to enhance the Aboriginal community's access to Country, and ability to practice Cultural Custodianship
- Respect Monero Ngarigo people's rights, obligations, roles and connections to Country as Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways by embedding Aboriginal cultural knowledge in project delivery
- Agree on what success looks like in terms of the health and wellbeing of Country via the draft Connecting with Country framework.

Strategic indicators

- Build relationships with local Aboriginal communities that incorporate employment and economic development opportunities for local Aboriginal people and businesses at all stages of the project.
- Establish Aboriginal-operated tourism businesses and grow a local Aboriginal business sector that leverages the Precinct's landscape values.
- Identify and celebrate traditional places of importance, including a recognition that many important Indigenous sites were flooded with the creation of Lake Jindabyne.

¹ Note, not connected to the draft Connecting with Country Framework from the NSW Government Architect mentioned elsewhere in this report.

- 
- Establish targets for the implementation of the Connecting with Country framework including mechanisms for the ongoing participation of Aboriginal people at all stages of the planning process.
 - Quantify demand, including the number of Aboriginal people, household structures, housing typologies, locational preferences, and affordability measures.
 - Establish targets for dedicated Aboriginal housing that support aspirations to return or remain on Country.
 - Areas are available for traditional and contemporary Cultural practices.
 - Traditional language and naming are used in consultation with Traditional Owners.

Exhibition period

The Snowy Mountains SAP draft Master Plan was on exhibition for 56 days, until midnight 23 August 2021.

There were some submissions made by Indigenous stakeholders directly to DPIE through the formal submission process. As those submissions were made directly, they will form part of DPIE's submissions report.

3. Connecting with Country



Let Country speak for herself.

Source: Murawin Pty Ltd, iStock.

The Connecting with Country Framework

Murawin was engaged by DPIE to facilitate community engagement with the Monero Ngarigo people with a connection to the Snowy Mountains area to get their opinions and gain their insights into the SAP planning process, and the NSW Government Architect's Draft Connecting with Country Framework (CwC) as a guide to planning on Aboriginal land.

While the CwC framework is in draft form and still being piloted throughout NSW, there are a number of principles within the CwC framework that suggest best practice ways of working with the Aboriginal community. Relevant to this project they include:

- Recognising that Country exists regardless of the built environment and has an ongoing timeless relationship with Traditional Owners and Custodians
- Letting Country Speak for herself through enabling the resurgence of cultural practices, protection of native flora and fauna and the inclusion of stories of place through architectural integration and intercultural planning
- Working with the Traditional Owners of Country from the beginning of the process
- Using Traditional Owner knowledge in the planning for and management of Country
- Building long lasting relationships with the Aboriginal community to activate long-term outcomes for the community
- Working with Traditional Owners within a co-design framework.

Ngarigo are the only snow people, it is remarkably different to other communities. Totems: Emu, wren, bat, tiger snake, kangaroo, crow, and eagle hawk. They are the makeup of society. (Aboriginal Knowledge Holder)

4. Community context



Identification as Traditional Owners

There is disagreement within the community about who is a Traditional Owner and has the right to speak for Country. It is not Murawin's role to make comment on the issues of assertion or identification as Traditional Owners. We do not have the Cultural or legislative right to decide who is and who isn't a Traditional Owner. Nor would we seek to do that, as it is culturally inappropriate.

The Department also has no Cultural authority to assert who should speak for Country. However, the Department could work with their Aboriginal colleagues in other relevant agencies to support the community come to a place of mutual understanding and agreement.

Historical background

Prior to colonisation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities understood where others lived and co-existed without delineating boundaries on maps. The current disputes are a direct result of colonisation and the policies that resulted in dispossession and forcible removals off Country.

People removed from Country were prohibited from practicing Culture: they could not tell their stories and narratives of Country, dance, sing, educate or speak in language. They were unable to care for their Country.

Monero Ngarigo people were moved out of the Snowy Monaro area in the 1920's. People were moved from Currawong, Bendock to Delegate, then moved from Delegate to Lake Tyres in Victoria and then to Wallaga Lake in NSW. Together these things have led to living Indigenous Culture where there is sometimes disagreement about Cultural issues, as communities try to navigate colonial-constructed legislative requirements.

Impact on consultations

Murawin ensures all views are heard and captured. As mentioned above it is not Murawin's role to resolve community disagreements in respect to Traditional Ownership and the right to speak for Country. Nor does the Department have any Cultural authority to assert who should speak for Country. However, this can lead, as was the case here, to time being spent during engagement on discussing these matters, and they become a sticking point so that only high-level aspirations are agreed.

There were several instances of Indigenous people declining to take part in the consultations because they "didn't want to get involved in the politics".

Next steps

This has led to some Traditional Owners asserting that government should put in place a process to ascertain who can speak for Country before consultation takes place so that government can be certain that they're speaking with the right people. It's Murawin's understanding that DPIE is willing to initiate a whole of government approach to support the community to resolve questions of who can speak for Country.

In accordance with principles of self-determination, the community must lead the process. Other parts of government and the community need to work together to move forward to ensure positive outcomes from the SAP for the Indigenous community.



Opportunity for the Indigenous community

The Snowy Mountains SAP Master Plan is a 40-year strategic plan for the Snowy Mountains precincts. The overall opportunity for the Indigenous community is to leverage the investment in the SAP area to enable better outcomes for the community and activate the principles within the CwC Framework. These outcomes will stem from inclusion in the SAP planning and specific objectives aimed at driving change for the community.

5. Methodology

Engaging Aboriginal communities

Good Aboriginal engagement has the potential to create supportive, purposeful and effective relationships with Aboriginal people, their businesses and communities, to identify real and sustainable employment, training, and economic development; and to ensure that Country is central to planning and delivery.

Department engagement prior to Murawin

Prior to Murawin's appointment to undertake community consultation, DPIE had engaged with Indigenous stakeholders through:

- Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Study,
- Contact with Aboriginal people identifying as Traditional Owners and Knowledge Holders, and Registered Aboriginal Parties,
- The Community Advisory Group, which has Indigenous representation,
- Presentation to the Southern Kosciusko Working Group.

Murawin's approach

The Connecting with Country framework favours a co-design approach which sees Aboriginal engagement as a collaborative process that starts at the beginning of planning and includes Traditional Owners in the process of planning – not through rounds of feedback, or through comment on a master plan, but by seeing the Indigenous contribution as an equally important input into the planning process and having Traditional Owners around the table as a part of the design process.

We understand that DPIE endeavoured to involve Traditional Owners and the Indigenous community prior to Murawin's appointment. Murawin was appointed to assist navigate complex relationships and guide DPIE through engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders now and into the future.

Aboriginal Engagement is complex due to the ongoing impacts of colonisation and the disruption this causes to Aboriginal communities and their cultural practices, kinship systems and governance structures relating to their Traditional Country. This has resulted in complex relationships both Indigenous to Indigenous as well as externally Indigenous to non-Indigenous.

For this reason, all engagement must be undertaken with a long-term view and a focus on building trust, equality and collaboration that is reciprocal in nature and has positive outcomes for Aboriginal people and their communities. A gradual and rewarding process can only be built on mutual trust and respect.

Project methodology

The methodology for this project involved:

- Identifying stakeholders, many who had previously been approached by DPIE and whose details were provided,
- Having initial one on one discussions with Traditional Owners to introduce Murawin, understand concerns and complexities, and identify other stakeholders.

- taking the Master Plan out to the community for feedback, especially in terms of Aboriginal values and the opportunities the SAP may bring for Aboriginal people in terms of employment, education, training and returning to Country. This report provides that feedback from the community.

Feedback on the Draft Master Plan

The Department had engaged with the Aboriginal community prior to drafting the Master Plan and acknowledged that further consultation was needed to ensure Aboriginal Cultural and social values were reflected in the Master Plan. Given the long-term nature of SAP implementation (40 years), it was a primary driver of consultation that actions can be implemented during delivery of the Master Plan.

At the time of engagement, the draft Master Plan was being finalised. Murawin had some input into the Master Plan at the end of the drafting process (after all the technical studies had concluded and the Structure Plan was complete) to support preparation of the objectives and strategic indicators in terms of outcomes for the Aboriginal community. This input was based on previous knowledge of the SAP process, and initial calls with Carol Vale, CEO of Murawin and the organisation's cultural lead.

Future consultation

Murawin recommends that the Department commits to take the recommendations of this engagement into consideration when moving from a draft to the final version of the Master Plan and continuing engagement to inform the Aboriginal stakeholders how it will take the feedback from this report and apply it.

This was undertaken in April 2022 and the results discussed in Section 8 of this report.

Consultation with the community

Groups of stakeholders

The consultation was intended to cover two aspects of community:

- First, and most important, the knowledge and views of Traditional Owners on whose Country this project takes place to hear of their ancestral and current connections to place.
- In addition, we sought to interview other Indigenous community members in the area about community issues – such as employment, environment, land, waters, Indigenous business, and housing.

Contacting stakeholders

Primarily consultation was with those that identify as Traditional Owners. The initial stakeholder list was comprised of those known to DPIE and National Parks and Wildlife Service as identifying as Monero Ngarigo, and some other community members, as well as Registered Aboriginal Parties.

With each interview Murawin also asked “who else should be consulted” and added to the contact list in that way.

Many of those identifying as Traditional Owners were members of Aboriginal Corporations and those corporations were interviewed where requested, and stakeholders generally contacted through their organisations. Murawin also approached all Local Aboriginal Land Councils that had land connections to the area. A list of those contacted is Annexed to this report.



Strengths and limitations

Strengths

The Department recognises the importance of the Connecting with Country framework and in seeking to partner with Indigenous communities to ensure that government investment in SAPs has a positive outcome for Indigenous communities in the area, and for Traditional Owners.

There is a recognition that Indigenous people should be involved in an ongoing way through the length of planning projects, and that these projects are directly about Country. Benefit should flow from Country to the community.

While there is recognition that more engagement should have happened earlier in this project, it is a sign of the Department's commitment to acknowledge that and commit to ongoing conversations.

Timing of consultation

The Department undertook some consultation prior to Murawin's involvement, and in the lead up to the draft Master Plan, incorporating comments into the draft. Murawin also spoke to some of the community by phone prior to the draft Master Plan, and those discussions formed part of the input to the draft Master Plan.

Nonetheless the timing of Murawin's consultations after completion of many of the preliminary reports was raised by community as being late in the process. This reflects the suggestions in the CwC framework, and has also been recognised by DPIE, including in the draft Master Plan.

Going forward there will be ongoing conversations and feedback sought by DPIE from the community. Special Activation Precincts are long term investments and DPIE intends to continue to build relationships with Aboriginal stakeholders through all phases of planning and implementation.

Other planning documents

As described in the introduction there are different plans that are relevant to the SAP, to the Kosciuszko National Park and its management, and there are additionally unrelated works being done in the Snowy Valley LGA.


To activate the SAP there are changes to the Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management, but the Plan of Management also relates the rest of the National Park as well, most of which is not in the SAP area. The amendment to the Plan of Management and the draft SAP Master Plan were on exhibition at the same time, and in two of the interviews there was confusion between the planning tools.

COVID-19

Consultations took place during Covid-19. Indigenous Culture relies on oral narrative and trust building, which can be better accomplished face to face. Because of Covid-19 all the consultations went online. Despite this method of engagement, there was good attendance of stakeholders.

6. Social information





There is a population of approximately 21,000 in the Snowy Monaro Regional Council area, which covers some 1,516,000 square kms. Approximately 2.2% of the population identifies as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

Within the SAP investigation area there are very few people identifying as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. One community member said there were four people from the same family in Jindabyne. We haven't been able to get any information on that family or how to contact them.

Jindabyne has so few Indigenous residents because the town is close to the snow fields and is seen as 'affluent playground of the rich', to paraphrase one resident. In our interview with Council, they also raised the issue that accurate population statistics are difficult because the census always occurs in winter, when there is an influx of tourists, and the population is at its highest.

With respect to jobs, more Snowy Monaro Regional Council area residents worked in accommodation and food services than any other industry in 2016. Most Aboriginal people in the area work for Aboriginal organisations and some people work in the schools, but anecdotally there are few Indigenous people working in hospitality.

There was no evidence of Indigenous businesses in the area except for one Alpine Adventure business, and the proprietor knew of no other Indigenous businesses. We were advised there is only one program being run in Cooma for Indigenous youth, run through Snowy Monaro Family Services called the Trax Program. That program assists Indigenous youth who want to explore more about their identity. It's not specifically aimed at Traditional Owners and custodians.

Stakeholder feedback from the non-Indigenous population was not a part of our scope, but there is anecdotal evidence based on those we talked to in Council, family services and National Parks, as well as visual evidence during the site tour, that there are few Cultural indicators in Jindabyne and the SAP area. In fact, few in Cooma outside of the SAP area.

There appears to be several reasons for that:

- Most Traditional Owners no longer live within the area, and are not able to afford to come back to the area for meetings and cultural events both because of travel costs and lack of availability of affordable housing,
- There are questions within the community about who has the right to claim to be Traditional Owner and can speak for Country,
- There is a lack of opportunities provided given the current demographics of the area.

This is despite evidence from Council that there is a high level of interest from people wanting to understand the Monaro Ngarigo Indigenous Connection to Country. There is a general shortage of affordable housing in Jindabyne, which is one of the areas that the SAP is looking to address. Much of the housing shortage is caused by the seasonal nature of the population. Housing affordability is also recognised as an issue impacting many LGAs throughout the state.

7. Findings and actions

In this section "Findings" refers to those things that were conveyed to us by community, and "Actions" are Murawin's recommended actions. Where there is additional commentary from Murawin it's labelled as "Discussion".

There is a summary table identifying where findings are SAP related, and where there is other government or non-government support required.

Who should speak for Country?

Finding

Stakeholders requested that government have a "proper process" to be able to determine "who are the right people to speak with". As raised earlier, questions of who a Traditional Owner is and who can speak for Country go to the core of consultation and engagement about Country.

This was a significant issue raised at most of the consultations. It was difficult for DPIE during their initial consultation, and for Murawin, to get agreement on any specific details for implementation of the SAP. It was clear that the community wants a resolution to this issue.

Most stakeholders have similar aspirations for the benefit they would like to see come from the SAP, but implementation will be an issue until underlying matters are resolved to build a strong community base for investment.

There is division in the community, and they should come together. There should be reconciliation between our mob. We had a kinship system. Elders of all Family groups should come together. We need to take the focus off ourselves and think of the kids. There needs to be a reinstatement of Culture of caring and sharing. (Aboriginal Elder)

More importantly, unless community can resolve these issues then it will be extremely difficult to leverage any of the investment in the Snowy Mountains SAP for the benefit of the Indigenous community.

Action

While it is not appropriate for Murawin or government to determine who can and can't speak for Country, it may be possible more broadly for government to support the community to lead a process.

Any process would need to be driven by community but committing time and resources would be a positive step toward building long term relationships with the community.

Inclusion in the planning process

Finding

Many comments about the SAP Master Plan, and the SAP itself, reflected a desire to be a part of planning processes from the beginning. There is inherent distrust in the consultation process, and in it having any meaningful outcomes for Indigenous people.

We want to have a voice. Our aspirations have been articulated over and over. Other people's rights override our rights. They are always talking about us, not to us. Not a proper way of dealing with proper people. It is a disappointing document. It should start from a point of empowerment. (Aboriginal Elder)

People said:

- Aboriginal people should have input into site assessments and plans. Many Elders and Knowledge Holders often don't participate in these processes as they are not made aware of them, and the process is not accessible to them.
- Reference Groups would be good and should be established. Build relationships in all stages.
- Aboriginal people want to be respected.
- Consult throughout the next five years. Don't leave it too late.
- Some people said that LALCs should be acknowledged and be included in the ongoing process for engagement going forward.

Action

It is recommended that the Department commit to an action of ongoing consultation, engagement and relationship building through the next stages of the planning process.

Employment

Hospitality

Findings

The community recognises the potential employment opportunities that could arise from the SAP, both short term in the building of SAP infrastructure, as well as long term employment in hospitality and in Cultural tourism.

There is a TAFE in Cooma that is ideally placed to provide courses in hospitality and tourism, and TAFE has internal Indigenous capability. The community suggested that specific hands-on experience for Indigenous people could be provided through the TAFE, with practical, hands-on courses being run through outreach in Jindabyne.

Action

Explore these opportunities with TAFE with their involvement in the Education and Sports Precinct in Jindabyne, via TAFE's Connection Learning Centre.

National Park - Caring for Country

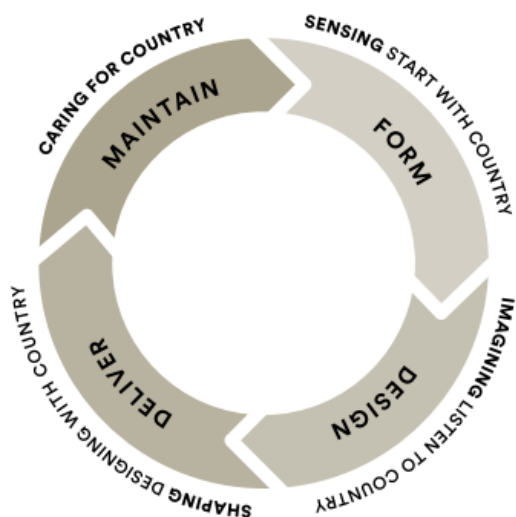
Traditional knowledge supports a wholistic approach to environment, sustainability, and regeneration.

None of the stakeholders interviewed thought the environment was being well managed in the National Park and SAP area.

The community pointed to a well-documented history of environmental degradation in the Snowy Mountains area. Issues in the Snowy Mountains area include:

- Destruction of environment by Brumbies,
- Rivers unable to receive proper water flows,
- The volume of tourism, and Country being unable to support the number of visitors,
- Destruction of habitats and pressure on native species.

The flooding of the valley to create Lake Jindabyne is seen as destruction of Country, and it contained sacred places that were flooded.



While there are many environmental issues beyond the scope of the SAP area, the idea of actively seeking to have further visitors coming into the area isn't a good outcome for healing Country. There is a general view that Country can't support the number of visitors projected.

The community would like to see more emphasis on regeneration and restoration of the environment. It was generally thought that Country could speak for herself, and regenerating the environment was preferable to investment in promoting tourism, with the aspirations for trail bikes singles out as problematic.

Look after Country and Country will look after you.

The community asserted that environmental restoration should be led by Traditional Owners, using Traditional Ecological Knowledge, and providing ongoing employment opportunities.

Action

This outcome would sit squarely with the Connecting with Country Framework – it is directly restoring Country and engaging Traditional Owners to undertake their obligations under Lore.

Country is fragile. The community has been affected by bushfires, horses, and wetlands are in poor condition. There is so much pressure on Country. The Snowy Hydro had a negative effect on Country. Planning was short sighted. (Aboriginal resident)

Access to Country

Findings

In line with the Connecting with Country approach is the concept of "return to Country." The term "return to Country" wasn't favoured by many of those we interviewed, who emphasise that the word "return" implies a broken Connection to Country, however people agreed with the intent, being access to Country for Cultural practices.

As we know from earlier, overall development of the area isn't favoured. In relation to access to Country, stakeholders said:

- There needs to be opportunities to return/continue connection with Country.
- Country is unwell. Country is fragile.
- Country connects us all.
- We need to look after Country.
- There is too much development occurring and destroying Country.

Commentary

The CwC framework used the following project life cycle for infrastructure and planning projects on Country:

- It suggests that infrastructure projects should find a way to enable Caring for Country, even after the project has moved on.

- As discussed in several other places in this report, those that identify as Traditional Owners don't live within the SAP area, or generally on Country.
- All those we consulted with were eager for a way to return to Country and Care for Country.

Findings

It was suggested by stakeholders that this could be facilitated in four ways:

- A meeting place in Jindabyne,
- A cultural centre on Country,
- A keeping place for artefacts,
- Accommodation facilities where Traditional Owners can stay.

Potentially these could all be housed together, although it was also suggested that there be a place for Traditional Owners be allowed to stay within the Kosciuszko National Park. There was no agreement where these places should be.

Places to stay on Country could be used for:

- Cultural Practices.
- Accommodation for Indigenous youth wanting to train with TAFE for hospitality and tourism.
- Traditional Owner accommodation for those that need to travel to Jindabyne for business reasons – meetings about Country, for example.
- Accommodating people attending for Sorry Business.

There were strong feelings that Traditional Owners, originally through forced removal and now due to the lack of accommodation and expense of Jindabyne, are unable to access Country, and this needed redress.

Other feedback in relation to access to Country includes:

- A desire for free access to the Kosciuszko National Park. It was said that Aboriginal people are being locked out of land and waters, particularly those in National Parks. It's understood that free access to the Kosciuszko National Park is already in place for Aboriginal people wanting access for Cultural purposes.
- A desire for access to research stations and huts and access to natural resources and plants that are used for healing.
- Desire for a "place to call our own". This could include a chalet providing accommodation for people to access Country. It was said that this would create employment and business opportunities.
- Request for a Keeping Place. A Keeping Place is a place where artefacts are kept, which may or may not be accessible by non-Indigenous people. The community confirmed that they have artefacts held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service that are not being looked after. Community members do not support co-location with European and Alpine heritage. They expressed the view that they feel they would be 'pushed to the back.'
- Request for access to cultural fishing grounds.
- Request for access to the Kosciusko National Park without having to ask for a "key to open gates", and access to e-passes.
- A need to be able to support Country with Cultural practices, with elders saying that "we would not have the devastating bushfires if we could burn our Country Cultural ways".



Curiosity Rocks - a significant landmark on Lake Jindabyne, Snowy Mountains

Source: Murawin Pty Ltd, iStock.

Things stopping people from being on Country were also noted:

- Lack of affordable long-term housing.
- Lack of access to jobs.
- Lack of ability and funds for Elders to travel to Country.

Actions

Explore opportunities/sites for a potential Cultural Centre.

Explore opportunities and sites within the SAP area within Kosciuszko National Park for access to Country, and provision for accommodation or sites to stay on Country.

Protection of Aboriginal sites

Comment

We understand that there are currently three Declared Aboriginal Places in the Snowy Monaro LGA, gazetted under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*. These are [Coolamatong \(Lambie Gorge\)](#) in Cooma, [Curiosity Rocks](#) in Jindabyne, and the [Delegate Aboriginal Reserve](#).

Aboriginal places protect areas of land which have recognised values of significance to Aboriginal people. A place can have spiritual, natural resource usage, historical, social, educational or other type of significance.

Findings

The community told both women's and men's stories related to Porcupine Rocks and said that it was a significant place and shouldn't be disturbed.

Study to build a lookout at Porcupine Rocks

One of the proposals being initiated as part of the SAP process is to build a lookout at Porcupine Rocks.

Of those interviewed for this project, only one person identifying as a Traditional Owner thought that, with appropriate storytelling and co-design with a reference group, the lookout could proceed.

However, the remainder of those identifying as Traditional Owners said that the lookout shouldn't go ahead. There is special significance to the place that makes it inappropriate for visitors.

It's noted that the ground in that area is already disturbed, and participants were questioned about that, and the fact that the place is already a walking track. While the surface has been disturbed and there may not be artefacts in the area, it's a special area with associated stories and spirit and shouldn't be accessed, or have further access encouraged.

Action

It's clear from the community consultation that Porcupine Rocks shouldn't be developed. If further investigation is to take place it should be done with a reference group of Traditional Owners.

Artefacts

There are artefacts held by the National Parks and Wildlife Service that have been collected in the area by the service as well as farmers and others.

There was consensus that artefacts should stay on Country, and where they are kept elsewhere (such as some currently held in Canberra), they should be returned to Country. There was consensus that:

- Artefacts should be in the Centre of Jindabyne and showcased for all to see (where they are appropriate for public display).
- Monero Ngarigo people should be the gatekeepers of their own Culture.
- A "keeping place" for artefacts could be in an accessible Cultural center.
- Monero Ngarigo people want to showcase heritage and Culture.

A Cultural Centre

Findings

Those that took part in the consultation were in favour of a Cultural Centre being built as a part of the SAP investments.

The community favoured a Cultural centre in a prominent place in Jindabyne. It would be a way of making Culture visible and could provide a source of income and employment opportunities for the community. People said:

- There should be a Cultural Centre in town with sculptures all around. There should be language in the Cultural Centre.

- Access to a Cultural Centre/Keeping Place would also support access to Country for cultural practices and obligations.
- A Cultural Centre could support local artists.
- Related business opportunities such as tours, food services, retail, affordable accommodation, education, and learning could all be connected to the Culture Centre.

Some suggestions for the placement of a Cultural Centre included:

- A Cultural Centre could be built in the Jindabyne town center in the Jindabyne Catalyst Precinct.
- The subdivision of Tyrolean Village on Council land.
- NPWS has staff accommodation that could be repurposed for Monero Ngarigo people to use as accommodation for return to Country activities and ceremonies.
- Merriman Local Aboriginal Land Council has 4 acres of land in Cooma on the dry plain that could be used as a Cultural Centre.
- There was some discussion of the proposal to co-locate a Cultural Centre within the Alpine Heritage Centre. More engagement should be conducted – the community generally doesn't use the Centre and there were no strong views either way.

There was discussion by the community that ongoing operation of a Cultural Centre (as distinct from initial investment) could be through the introduction of a levy on tourist accommodation, entry to the National Park, or from other tourist activities.

Action

Investigate ongoing funding for a Cultural Centre and a suitable place for a Cultural Centre.

Visibility of Culture

Findings

Community said:

- There is a lack of visibility of any Aboriginal Culture. Monero Ngarigo people and Culture should be acknowledged publicly.
- Many young people take a long time to identify as Aboriginal. This is a part of the invisibility of Culture in the area.
- Funding is needed to bring young people up in Cultural ways.
- A celebration of Monero Ngarigo Country would help young people come to their identity.
- Showcasing Culture is not just art and stories. There was a suggestion for a Bogong Moth Festival to celebrate the Culture heritage of the area.

Actions

Investigate opportunities in the SAP area for:

- Welcome to Country.
- Local Aboriginal art.
- Stories and narratives showcasing Monero Ngarigo Country and Culture, such as on public walking tracks.
- Other opportunities in consultation with the local Aboriginal population.

Summary Table

Finding	SAP Related	Responsibility	Support
Speaking for Country	Indirectly – needed to achieve SAP outcomes	Traditional Owners	Whole of Government
Ongoing Consultation	From Planning through to Delivery	DPIE has committed to ongoing engagement for the remainder of the planning phase, however a whole of government approach is needed for ongoing engagement.	Murawin Whole of Government
Employment	Yes, SAP can leverage employment opportunities, including hospitality, Cultural employment, and Caring for Country	NSW Government, as part of the SAP, to lead and establish relationships to explore opportunities.	TAFE, NSW National Parks and Wildlife, Department of Regional NSW, Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation
Access to Country	Yes, within the SAP boundaries. Some of the matters discussed, such as access to fishing sites, have application outside the SAP area.	In Jindabyne – potential for infrastructure development lead by Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation; In National Park, led by NSW National Parks and Wildlife	Snowy Monaro Regional Council, NSW National Parks and Wildlife.
Protection of Sites generally	Yes, within the SAP area.	DPIE through Master Plan	NSW National Parks and Wildlife
Porcupine Rocks Lookout	Yes	DPIE protection through the Master plan	NSW National Parks and Wildlife
Cultural Centre	Yes, infrastructure can be built within the SAP	DPIE identification of potential areas in the Master Plan	Regional growth NSW Development Corporation, Snowy Monaro Regional Council and private sector interests
Visibility of Culture	Yes	DPIE through the Master Plan.	Regional Growth NSW Development Corporation, Snowy Monaro Regional Council, National Parks and Wildlife Services

8. Objectives, indicators, and other findings

This section presents the findings by suggesting a redraft of the Objectives and Strategic Indicators, with other findings following.

Objectives – Suggested redraft

The objectives contained in the draft Snowy Mountains SAP are set out below, with suggested consideration for revision based on the findings and actions in this report:

- Build relationships with Monero Ngarigo Traditional Owners at all stages of development, and in accordance with the NSW Government Architect's Office draft Connecting with Country framework.
- Celebrate Monero Ngarigo Culture, values, and heritage in future **investment and development, including in Cultural assets such as a Cultural Centre.**
- Enable formal Monero Ngarigo participation in Caring for Country, making decisions about Country, contemporary use of natural resources and Cultural knowledge transmission, and protection of key geographical features. **Through Caring for Country promote Indigenous knowledge to heal Country and adapt and mitigate impacts of climate change.**
- Foster partnerships between Monero Ngarigo people and relevant agencies to enhance the Aboriginal community's access to Country, and ability to practice Cultural Custodianship.
- Respect Monero Ngarigo people's rights, obligations, roles and connections to Country as Traditional Custodians of the land and waterways by embedding Aboriginal Cultural knowledge in project delivery
- Agree on what success looks like in terms of the health and wellbeing of Country via the draft Connecting with Country framework.

Strategic indicators – Suggested redraft

The strategic indicators contained in the draft Snowy Mountains SAP draft Master Plan are set out below, with suggested amendments based on the findings and actions in this report. These indicators can be included as success criteria in the Implementation Plan.

- Build relationships with local Aboriginal communities **and other organisations, including TAFE**, which incorporate training, employment and economic development opportunities for local Aboriginal people and businesses at all stages of the project **and through various supply chains.**
- Establish Aboriginal-operated tourism and related businesses and grow a local Aboriginal business sector.
- Identify and celebrate traditional places of importance, including a recognition that many important Indigenous sites were flooded with the creation of Lake Jindabyne.
- **Monero Ngarigo Culture is at the forefront of the SAP development. This may include opportunities to showcase Monero Ngarigo Culture through:**
 - **Welcome to Country**
 - **Wayfinding**
 - **Dual naming**
 - **Architectural integration of Aboriginal perspectives into the build environment**
 - **Narratives and stories in public access places, such as around Lake Jindabyne**
 - **Artist opportunities for local Indigenous creatives and artists**
- Traditional language and naming are used in consultation with Traditional Owners.
- **Investment in infrastructure for a Cultural Centre that may include:**

- A Keeping Place
- Meeting space
- Accommodation
- Education space
- Establish targets for the implementation of the Connecting with Country framework including mechanisms for the ongoing participation of Aboriginal people at all stages of the planning process. Those targets are used for longitudinal measures of the wellness of Country.
- Quantify demand, including the number of Aboriginal people, household structures, housing typologies, locational preferences, and affordability measures.
- Establish targets for dedicated Aboriginal housing that support aspirations to return or remain on Country.
- Areas are available for traditional and contemporary Cultural practices.
- Limit disturbance of new Country in the Kosciuszko National Park in relation to the SAP area and ensure consultation with Traditional Owners in these areas.
- Important sites are protected.
- Explore sources of funding for a Cultural Centre, and ongoing operation of the Cultural Centre, e.g., levy or grants to support Cultural infrastructure, including private investment.

Other findings

Self-determination and speaking for Country

The Indigenous community be supported to engage in a process to determine the Traditional Owners and who can speak for Country. In accordance with self-determination this process should be community lead, with support from the whole of government. Explore this possibility with Snowy Monaro Regional Council, Department of Regional NSW, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Environmental protection

There is concern for the environment, and environmental degradation. The community would like to see environmental degradation addressed through incorporating Indigenous knowledge and practices to Care for Country, and by providing employment opportunities to Traditional Owners to Care for Country. There is concern that Country cannot sustain development and the number of tourists.

Significant site – Protection of Porcupine Rocks

Development of a lookout at Porcupine Rocks is halted given the significance of the site.

Recommendations

- 1** Revisit the Governance Structure for the implementation of the SAP Master Plan moving forward to ensure inclusive representation and processes for Traditional Owners, Cultural Knowledge Holders and other Aboriginal stakeholders with a connection to the Snowy Mountains area to have input.
- 2** Celebrate and showcasing Monero Ngarigo Culture values and heritage in future investment and development including in Cultural assets in an Aboriginal managed Cultural Centre. Aboriginal stakeholders consulted do not want a general Cultural Centre that celebrates Alpine (non-Indigenous Culture) in with theirs. The preference is for a specific Aboriginal Cultural Centre.
- 3** Dual naming and enhanced visibility of Ngarigo Culture in the built environment. Culture and Country should be publicly acknowledged
- 4** Foster partnerships between Monero Ngarigo people and relevant agencies to enhance the Aboriginal community's access to Country and ability to practice Cultural Custodianship.
- 5** Develop a Measure of Success Framework which is co-designed with Aboriginal people to ensure their input into what success looks like in terms of the SAP.
- 6** There is concern for the environment and degradation. Provide access opportunities for Aboriginal people to Country to enable their desire to continue caring for Country.
- 7** There is dissent over who's Country it is and who can speak for it. The Aboriginal community to be supported to engage in a process to determine the Traditional Owners who can speak for Country. In accordance with self-determination, the process should be community lead with support from the whole of government
- 8** There appears to be a deep, historical lack of trust in Government, which was exacerbated by the Masterplan due to a lack of proper considered Engagement with mob. Suggested a Healing Day (return to place) & Snowy Mountain First Nations working group be established.



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