

# Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park

Management Plan 2014

Managed to maintain healthy Country and extend the relationships between the Yandruwandha and the Yawarrawarrka people and their Country.



**Government  
of South Australia**

Department of Environment,  
Water and Natural Resources

# Minister's Foreword

Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park is the iconic centrepiece of the Coongie Lakes Ramsar site, and an arid zone wetland system of international significance. It is also a beautiful place with special significance to many people.

The establishment of the new park name – Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park, is an important milestone for the park and the traditional owners - the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people. The development of this management plan further affirms the community's commitment to the creation of a new chapter in the park's narrative, where conservation, tourism and the aspirations of traditional owners flourish.

I acknowledge the leadership of the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee which has enabled the development of this plan and has further strengthened the constructive working relationships between the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people and the South Australian Government.

I also acknowledge the efforts of the Friends of Innamincka Reserves and others who have assisted in the development of this plan and continue to assist in the protection of this important park.

It is with much pleasure that I formally adopt this management plan for Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park under section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*.



The Hon Ian Hunter MLC

Minister for Sustainability, Environment  
and Conservation





# Directions for management

Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park protects Malkumba (the bodies of water where the serpent rests), Aboriginal cultural values, arid zone vegetation communities, wildlife habitats, rare or threatened plant and animal species and is a core component of the internationally significant Coongie Lakes Ramsar wetland. The park is a beautiful and relatively undeveloped visitor destination that has been shaped by drought and wind and nourished by the waters of the Cooper Creek.

The Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people are two distinct Aboriginal groups who are the traditional owners of an extensive area in the north-east of South Australia encompassing Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park. The Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka people and South Australia's Minister for Sustainability, Environment and Conservation agreed to manage the park cooperatively in 2008. Consequently, the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee was created to help the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people and government to work together on the management of Country. This plan will progress this partnership by setting directions for management and describing the aspirations of the traditional owners for their Country.

The creeks, lakes and flood-out areas within the park are a key component of the Cooper Creek Catchment and the Lake Eyre Basin's critical and unique aquatic ecosystems. To ensure a coordinated, ecosystem based approach to the protection and management of these aquatic ecosystems throughout the basin, the management of key environmental assets such as the Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park is guided by strategies and plans that apply to the entire Lake Eyre Basin or Cooper Creek Catchment. Plans that have a major influence over the management of the park include the *South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resource Management Plan* (SAAL NRM Board 2010) and the *South Australian Arid Lands Biodiversity Strategy, Volume 1 and 2* (SAAL NRM Board 2009).

In Australia, Ramsar wetlands are managed in accordance with the Australian Ramsar Management Principles, that are set out in Schedule 6 of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2000* (EPBC 2000) and relevant national guidelines for Ramsar wetlands. The park will be managed in a way that is consistent with these principles and guidelines, and any future Coongie Lakes Ramsar wetland management plan.

This is the first park management plan for Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park and was adopted on 3rd November 2014 subject to any native title rights or interests that may continue to exist in relation to the land. It meets the requirement for the completion of a park management plan specified under section 38 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972*. The Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources, the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee and the South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board will work with stakeholders to determine priorities and coordinate the implementation of activities outlined in this plan.

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# Park significance and purpose

## **The long-term protection and enhancement of Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park begins by understanding its significance.**

Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park is constituted under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*. The park covers an area of 26 661 ha in the north-east of South Australia, approximately 110 km north-west of Innamincka (Figure 1). The land within the park was previously part of the Innamincka Regional Reserve and was proclaimed as a National Park in 2005 to conserve significant wetlands, provide experiences for visitors and ensure that the core component of the Coongie Lakes system was protected. Consistent with the Act, the park is managed primarily for conservation purposes. Grazing, petroleum and mining activities are not allowed within the park.

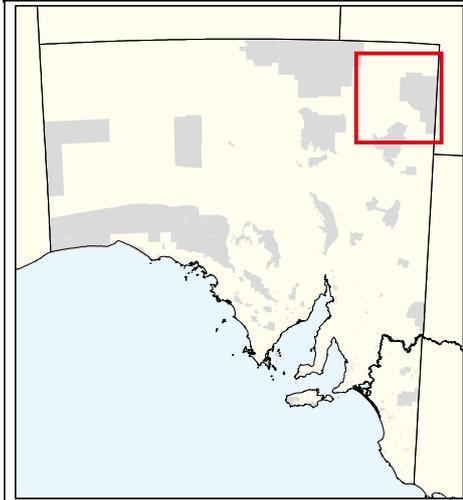
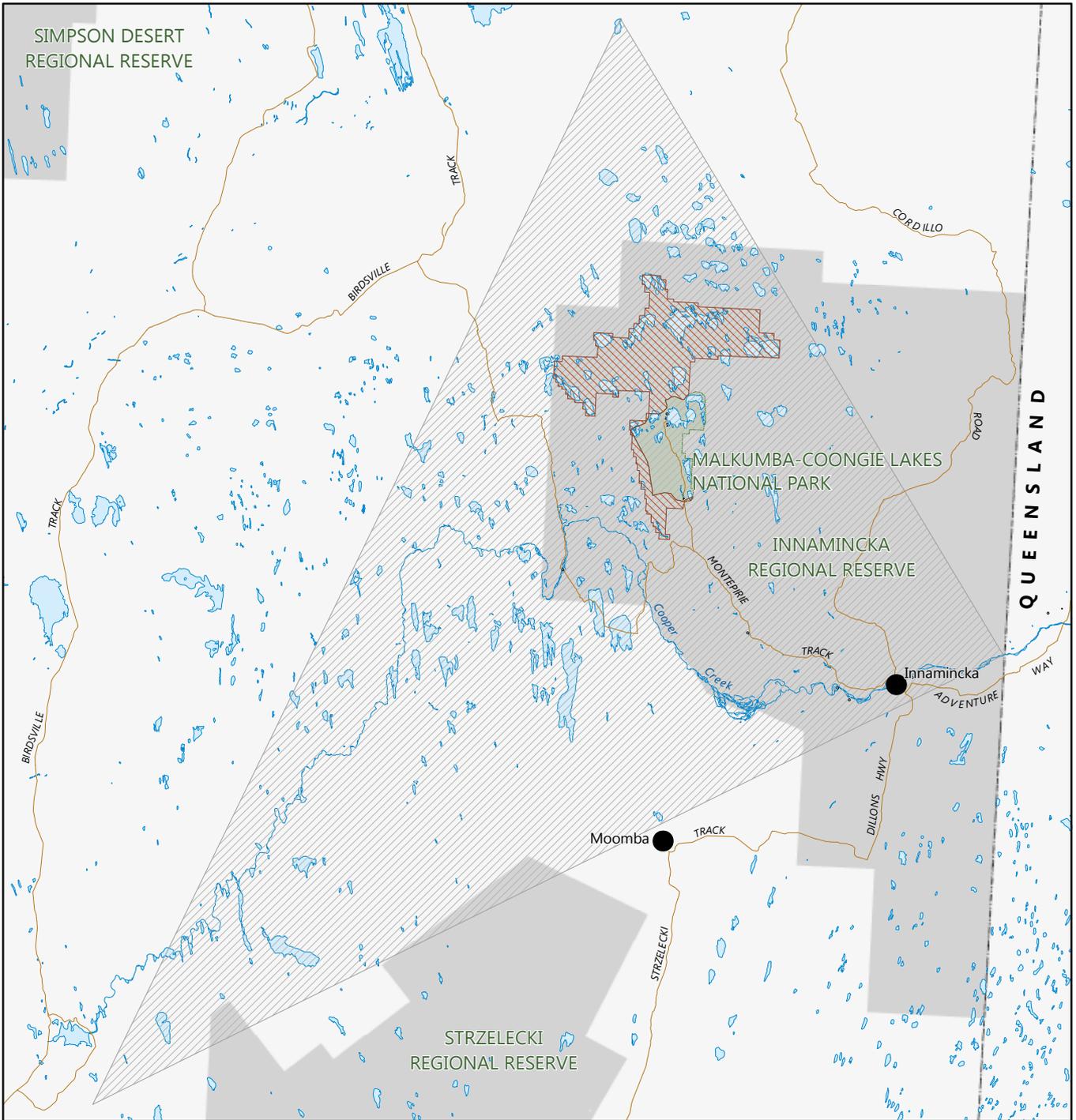
The traditional owners have a deep spiritual relationship with their ancestral lands which include the park. The park contains numerous culturally significant features and sites which sustain this relationship.

Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park and the surrounding Innamincka Regional Reserve

(1 354 055 ha) form one of South Australia's largest contiguous protected areas. Within these large areas, ecological processes are relatively unmodified by human influences and are therefore more effective for the conservation of biodiversity.

The park protects the core of an extensive system of wetlands and near-permanent freshwater lakes called the Coongie Lakes. The park, together with adjacent wetlands are a part of the Coongie Lakes Ramsar Wetland which was listed under the Ramsar Convention as a Wetland of International Importance in 1987, in recognition of its important role in providing refugia for the conservation of migratory and nomadic birds (Figure 1). The Coongie Lakes are recognised as a highly significant refuge for biological diversity in arid and semi-arid Australia (Morton et al. 1995) and are one of Australia's Important Bird Areas that have been identified by Birds Australia (Dutson et al. 2009). The presence of perennial water in an arid environment provides critical refuge for water dependent species under pressure from a changing climate including significant numbers of migratory species, notably waterbirds.

The Innamincka region is synonymous with the outback pastoral industry and the ill-fated Burke and Wills expedition from Melbourne to the Gulf of Carpentaria which occurred in 1860 and 1861. Together with Cooper Creek, the park is one of Australia's most iconic outback visitor destinations. It is not visited by large numbers of people nor widely promoted, however the park's isolation, undeveloped character, Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka culture and history of exploration and pastoralism make it an interesting destination with a unique character. The park continues to be a special place for many people who have visited the park and contributed to its conservation over many years, including the Friends of Innamincka Reserves and the Toyota Landcruiser Club.

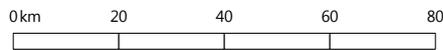


**Figure 1 - Location**

**Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park**

**LEGEND**

-  Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park
-  Other parks
-  Coongie Lakes Ramsar wetland
-  No Mining zone
-  Lake or wetland
-  Public road



# Setting the management direction

Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park will be managed as a key environmental asset within extensive arid zone and aquatic ecosystems. This will be achieved through management activities that are coordinated throughout the Lake Eyre Basin and implemented in collaboration with the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka people, volunteer groups, the resources sector, pastoral lease holders and the South Australian Government.

## What are we protecting?

The Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park contributes to the protection of:

- the core component of an internationally significant freshwater Ramsar wetland;
- opportunities for the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people to exercise their rights in respect to their land, continue their culture and maintain their long-term connection to Country;
- Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka cultural heritage sites;
- lakes, creeks, floodout areas and dunes systems;
- extensive areas of waterbird habitat including important breeding sites;
- a diverse range of riparian and arid zone fauna and vegetation communities;
- many flora and fauna species that are rare or threatened in South Australia (Appendix 1); and
- a unique and relatively undeveloped outback tourist destination.

## What are the challenges?

Key challenges in the protection and management of the Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park are:

- adapting park management to ensure that Aboriginal cultural values identified through cultural surveys are conserved, and damage to unrecorded Aboriginal cultural sites is prevented;
- enabling the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people to continue their connection to Country;
- recognising and using the traditional knowledge and land management skills of the traditional owners;
- understanding natural hydrological processes and enabling them to occur without unnecessary interference;
- minimising the impact of weeds and pests on native flora and fauna, aquatic ecosystems and cultural sites;
- retaining the natural, relatively undeveloped values that enable visitors to enjoy a unique outback experience;
- communicating messages about the protection of Aboriginal culture, wildlife and fragile arid zone vegetation to visitors in a remote location;
- ensuring that objectives for the management of the park complement those of the Cooper Creek, Coongie Lakes Ramsar Wetland, Innamincka Regional Reserve and the Cooper Creek catchment; and
- understanding climate change impacts and enabling species to remain resilient to the effects of a changing climate.





## Management themes and priorities

This section of the plan addresses the most important issues facing the park, focussing on three key themes.

### Theme 1: Continuing traditional management

Despite the unpredictability of this land, generations of Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people lived and thrived around the Coongie Lakes before the arrival of European explorers in the 1840s. The subsequent arrival of pastoralists in the 1870s had a profound impact on the lives of the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people. Within the space of a generation, Aboriginal people were moved off their land, removed from the world from which Aboriginal people came, taking skills, knowledge and stories passed down over thousands of years. Despite loss of Country, Aboriginal culture was not lost. Stories of the old ways, the language and culture have been passed down to descendants who remain connected to the land.

Formal arrangements have been established for the cooperative management of the park by the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people and the South Australian Government. The establishment of the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee is an initial step towards a partnership between the traditional owners and Government that is based on shared knowledge, trust and goodwill. The Advisory Committee has advised the Government during the development of this management plan and will continue to provide advice regarding management of the park.

Three zones have been created to enable traditional owners to undertake traditional activities in the park: a Heritage and Conservation Zone, a Living and Camping Zone, and a Fishing Zone. The location of these zones is outlined in Figure 2. For practical purposes, the water-line of Coongie Lake has been defined as the boundary between the Living and Camping Zone and the Fishing Zone. The Fishing Zone extends from the water-line onto Coongie Lake for a distance of 100 metres.

Table 1 provides further detail about the types of activities which may be undertaken within each of these zones by Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people, the spouses of traditional owners, people that are required for traditional law or customary reasons, and people that are requested to assist in, observe or record traditional activities.

*Image above: The Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee (L-R): Lucy Dodd, Craig Allen, Vicki Linton, Tony Magor, Rob Singleton, Theresa Bottrell, Joshua Haynes, Wendy Webb.*

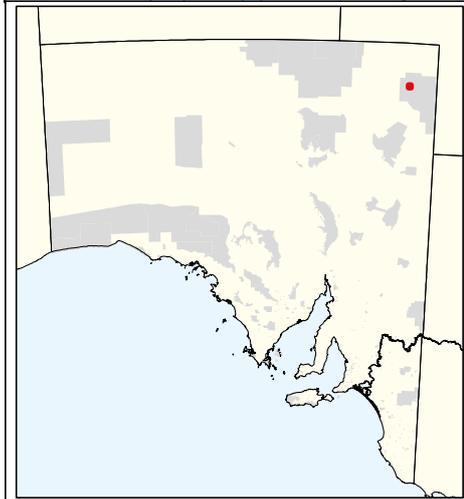
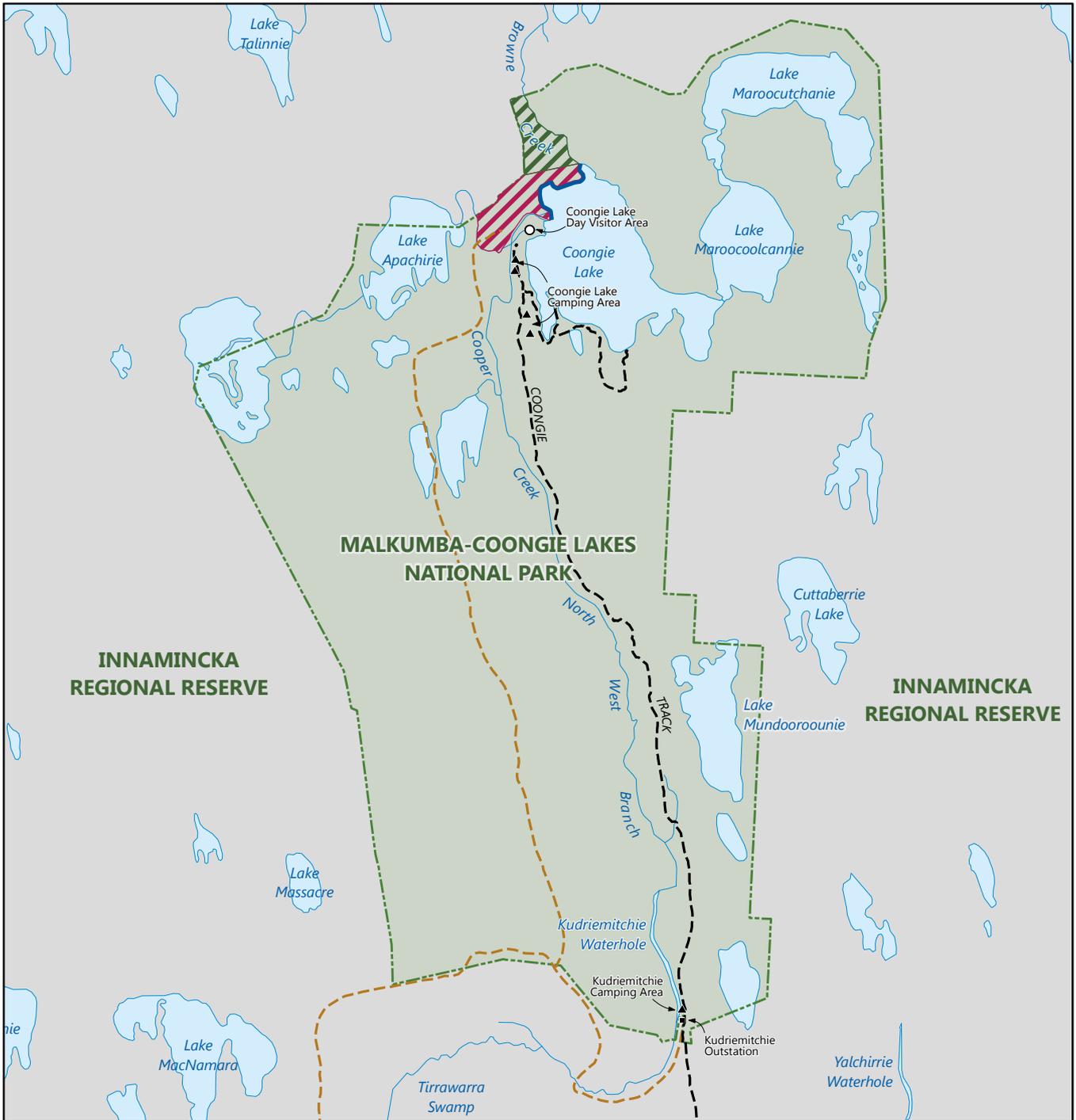
## Objectives and Strategies

Enhance the relationship between the traditional owners and their ancestral lands.

- Develop a hunting and gathering protocol to record the quantity of each wildlife species taken for traditional purposes. Monitor the quantity of each species taken and establish limits if required.
- Develop a cultural heritage plan to guide the management of cultural sites, story lines, story places (including sacred sites), birth places, rock art, camping places, waterways and other places important to the Yandruwandha and the Yawarrawarrka people. The plan should also address non-Aboriginal history.
- Encourage research which provides an improved understanding of Aboriginal cultural values and the potential impact of management activities.
- Construct a shed-tank and ablution facilities for use by the Yandruwandha and the Yawarrawarrka people within the Living and Camping Zone.
- Review and amend park signs and information to communicate the new park name and discourage non-traditional owners from entering the Living and Camping Zone.

**Table 1**

Activity	Zone			Additional Information
	Heritage and Conservation Zone (see Figure 2)	Living and Camping Zone (see Figure 2)	Fishing Zone (see Figure 2)	
Fishing	✘	✘	✓	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may fish in this zone in accordance with the <i>Management Plan for the Lake Eyre Basin Fisheries</i> (PIRSA 2013).
Hunting	✓	✓	✘	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may hunt any species for food or cultural purposes using traditional methods in these zones. This must be undertaken in accordance with the hunting and gathering protocol (once developed). Firearms are not permitted in the park.
Gathering food, materials & other resources.	✓	✓	✓	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may gather food materials and other resources in these zones. This must be undertaken in accordance with the hunting and gathering protocol (once developed).
Gathering fire wood	✘	✓	✘	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may gather fallen timber within this zone.
Camping	✘	✓	n/a	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may camp in this zone, the Coongie Lake Camping Area and the Kudriemitchie Camping Area for up to 21 consecutive nights (see Figure 2).
Construction of facilities	✘	✓	n/a	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may erect a non-permanent shelter for up to 21 days in this zone. Any materials that have been brought into the park must be removed from the park as soon as the shelter has been deconstructed.
Lighting a fire	✘	✓	n/a	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may have a campfire in this zone and the Kudriemitchie Camping Area (see Figure 2). Restrictions apply to the lighting of fires including the prohibition of all fires during the fire danger period and days of total fire ban.
Driving a vehicle	✘	✓	n/a	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may drive on management tracks as well as any other tracks that are open to the public and defined in Figure 2.
Conducting burials	✓	✓	n/a	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may conduct burials throughout the park in accordance with the protocols that are specified in the Coongie Lakes National Park Indigenous Land Use Agreement.
Using a generator	✘	✓	✘	Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may use a generator within this zone (subject to restrictions - see Theme 3), the Coongie Lake Camping Area and the Kudriemitchie Camping Area (Figure 2).



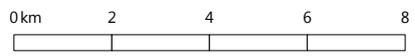
**Figure 2**  
Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park

**LEGEND**

- ▲ Camping Area
- Public access track
- - - Management track
- · - · - Park boundary
- ☪ Lake and watercourse

**Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Traditional Use Zones**

- Heritage and Conservation Zone
- Living and Camping Zone
- Fishing Zone





## Theme 2: Enhancing the ecological character of the Coongie Lakes

The ecological character of a wetland arises from its distinctive life forms, features and ecological characteristics. Consistent with the Australian Ramsar Management Principles (EPBC 2000), Coongie Lakes Ramsar Wetland and the Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park are managed to enhance ecological character.

A labyrinth of lakes, flood-outs and channels within the park are fringed by riparian woodland communities comprising River Red Gum (*Eucalyptus camaldulensis*), Coolabah (*Eucalyptus coolabah* ssp. *arida*) and understoreys comprising species including Lignum (*Muehlenbeckia florulenta*), Queensland bluebush (*Chenopodium auricomum*) and Old-man Saltbush (*Atriplex numularia*).

Yalkuparlu (River Red Gum) has been a source of food, materials for shelter and medicine for the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people. The bark, timber and seeds of Coolabah trees also have many uses, as does pundrinya (Lignum) which provides fibre for the construction of fishing nets called yamili.

Between the lakes there are dry sandy plains and low sand dunes. These areas support native grasslands and shrublands comprising species including Umbrella Bush (*Acacia ligulata*) and Old-man Saltbush. Three hundred and thirty plant species have been recorded in the park, including six species listed as rare under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* (Appendix 1).

There are also four threatened ecological communities within the park: Coolabah and River Red Gum woodland on regularly inundated floodplains, Old-man Saltbush on floodplains, Queensland Bluebush shrubland on cracking clay depressions subject to periodic waterlogging and Broughton Willow (*Acacia salicina*) and Coolabah +/- Bauhinia (*Lysiphyllum gilvum*) woodland along drainage lines and on floodplains.

Many animal species provide food for the Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people, including tjukurru (kangaroos), kalamurru (goannas), marnngani (yabbies) and thuka (mussels). Water courses, wetlands and near-permanent lakes within the park provide habitat and drought refuge for many arid zone animal species, many of which may be vulnerable to the effects of climate change. The park provides habitat for aquatic species including the Cooper Creek catfish (*Neosiluroides cooperensis*) which is considered rare in South Australia (Hammer et al. 2009) and several other species that are endemic to the Cooper Creek. The Yellow-bellied Sheathtail bat (*Saccolaimus flaviventris*) and the Knife-footed Frog (*Cyclorana cultripes*) are listed under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* as rare (Appendix 1). The Macquarie Tortoise (*Emydura macquarii*) – more often known as the Cooper Creek Turtle (*Emydura macquarii emmotti*) – is also found in the park and is listed as vulnerable under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* (Appendix 1). The frog community is considered one of the richest in central Australia (Morton et al. 1995).

Two hundred and five bird species have been recorded in the park, including 24 species that are listed as rare or threatened in South Australia (Appendix 1). The park provides critical habitats and extensive breeding areas for 75 waterbird species. Eighteen species are listed under international treaties such as the Japan-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (Commonwealth of Australia 1995a) and the China-Australia Migratory Bird Agreement (Commonwealth of Australia 1995b) and 29 species are listed a migratory with Australia. This includes the Magpie Goose (*Anseranas semipalmata*) and the Square-tailed Kite (*Lophoictinia isura*), which are also listed in South Australia as endangered under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* (Appendix 1). Where they have been prepared, rare or threatened species are managed in accordance with recovery plans.

As a result of their importance for migratory and nomadic birds, the Coongie Lakes have been listed under the Ramsar Convention as a Wetland of International Importance (Ramsar 1971). Objectives for the management of Australia's Ramsar wetlands are outlined in the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Regulations*. They include an objective to 'promote their conservation with the aim of preventing changes to their ecological character'. *Ramsar Handbook 18: Managing wetlands*, offers guidance for integrating wetland management into broad-scale environmental management planning (Ramsar Convention Secretariat 2010).

The ecological character of the park and the Coongie Lakes Ramsar Wetland is dictated by periods of inundation and drought stemming from the flow of Cooper Creek. This system has been described by Aboriginal people as the dreaming serpent. The serpent comes to life during times of flood, winding its way from eastern Queensland to Lake Eyre. This system is widely recognised as being one of the last internally draining rivers in the world in a relatively natural condition. Significantly, the entire catchment is 'unregulated' - the catchment flows and floods naturally, in contrast to most of the Murray-Darling Basin. The ecological condition of the park is dictated by unpredictable rainfall events across South Australia and Queensland, the management of flows through Cooper Creek drainage system, and a range of complex land management issues across an enormous catchment.

The Lake Eyre Basin covers 1.2 million square kilometres and stretches across large areas of South Australia, the Northern Territory, Queensland and New South Wales. A coordinated response to environmental threats by all land managers within the Cooper Creek catchment enhances the management of the ecological character of the system. Relevant states and territories have endorsed the Lake Eyre Basin Intergovernmental Agreement to guide the coordinated management of the basin. The Lake Eyre Basin Community Advisory Committee was established to facilitate community input into the management of the basin. The Great Artesian Basin Strategic Management Plan (GAB Coordinating Committee 2000) promotes a coordinated approach to the management of water resources by the states and the Northern Territory. Within the South Australian portion of the basin, the South Australian Arid Lands Natural Resource Management Plan sets strategic direction for the broad scale land management and biodiversity conservation in the region (SAAL NRM Board 2010).

Water is extracted from the Cooper Creek in line with the Catchment Water Management Plan for the South Australian Arid Lands Region (SAAL NRM Board 2006) and a Memorandum of Understanding between the South Australian Government and pastoral lease holders. Artesian water is also extracted for mining, stock and domestic use in the vicinity of the park. Water flow statistics have been monitored for many years across the state and there are flow meters near Seven Mile Yard within the park and at

Cullyamurra Waterhole on Cooper Creek within Innamincka Regional Reserve. This information has helped develop an understanding of hydrology within the basin and the park (Costelloe 2013). Maintaining annual flows and major flood events in particular, is critical for the maintenance of the park's ecological and cultural character. Achieving this requires that any alteration to flooding patterns, erosion, water pollution, water extraction or other water affecting activities in the Cooper Creek Catchment are minimised.

The park is situated within the Cooper Basin, a major natural gas field. While the park has not been proclaimed for mineral or petroleum exploration or mining, there is extensive mining infrastructure and activity associated with the production of natural gas in nearby areas including the adjacent Innamincka Regional Reserve. To ensure that mineral or petroleum activities do not impact on the park or adjacent Ramsar wetlands, three buffer zones have been established within the adjacent Innamincka Regional Reserve. The No Mining Zone was created under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act*. This zone surrounds the park and prohibits all mineral and petroleum activities (Figure 1). Two additional zones have been established under the *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act 2000*. The first of these is the Walk-in Zone which surrounds both the park and the No Mining Zone. Petroleum activities that may occur under licence within the Walk-in Zone are confined to subsurface drilling and walk-in access. The second zone established under the *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act* is located to the west of the park over a major flood-out area with significant natural and cultural values. Specific conditions apply to all licensed petroleum activities within this zone that are over and above those that normally apply elsewhere.

Any potential environmental impacts on the park associated with mineral, petroleum and geothermal activities, including water affecting activities are managed through the *Mining Act 1971* or the *Petroleum and Geothermal Energy Act* and their associated processes. The Department of State Development is responsible for monitoring the activities of companies operating under these Acts. This ensures that any risks to the park from these activities are considered and appropriately managed. The development of detailed management strategies for these zones is not within the scope of this plan but will be considered during future park management planning for the Innamincka Regional Reserve.

Invasive weeds and pest animals (including aquatic pests) and, to a lesser extent, grazing by stray cattle, have potential to affect the ecological condition of the park and have a major impact on rare or threatened species and threatened ecological communities. While the park boundary is fenced, it has occasionally been necessary to remove stray stock from the park. Feral pigs within the park compete with native animals for food, foul watercourses and wetlands, destroy vegetation and spread weeds.

Dryland weed species such as Cooch Grass (*Cynodon dactylon*), Buffel Grass (*Cenchrus ciliaris*) and Mexican Poppy (*Argemone ochroleuca*) have been recorded within the park. Prickly Acacia (*Acacia nilotica*) has been found near the park and is recognised as a Weed of National Significance. Buffel Grass is recognised as one of Australia's worst environmental weeds (Grice and Martin 2005) and a strategy has been developed to guide its management in South Australia (Biosecurity SA 2012). Vigilance and early detection will enable active and immediate action.



Ongoing opportunistic monitoring is essential, especially for the early detection and control of highly successful invasive species. Pest plants and animals are a significant concern and require management at a catchment scale through programs coordinated with neighbours, regional authorities and other agencies. The management of pest plants and animals is guided by the *Arid Lands Natural Resources Management Board Pest Management Strategy 2005-2010* (Pitt et al. 2006). This strategy identifies existing and potential pest species and outlines actions for the strategic and coordinated management of threats to biodiversity associated with pest species including the early detection and control of priority invasive species.

Prior to the proclamation of the park, stock were voluntarily removed from the area by the lease holder, S Kidman and Co Ltd. At this time, an agreement was established between the Department of

Environment, Water and Natural Resources and S Kidman and Co Ltd that enables the droving of stock on two designated routes and the mustering of stray stock using motor vehicles, motorbikes and aircraft.

A natural regime of fire is critical for the survival and regeneration of vegetation within the park. Fires in this area are infrequent and there has been minimal prescribed burning to date. However prescribed burning supported by research and monitoring may be necessary in the future to ensure that the frequency and intensity of fire is maintained at natural levels.

Further research is also required to improve understanding of the park's values and their susceptibility to threatening processes including potential changes to the climate and the flow of Cooper Creek.

## Objectives and Strategies

Conserve biodiversity within the park by enabling natural ecological processes to flourish.

- Integrate monitoring of biodiversity into programs already developed for the monitoring of ecological character within the Ramsar wetland. Encourage partners to contribute to hydrological research, monitoring and water management programs within the park and greater Ramsar wetland.
- Ensure that plans developed for the Lake Eyre Basin consider the environmental flow requirements of the park and greater Ramsar wetland.
- Ensure that the traditional owners have the opportunity to contribute their skills and knowledge into research, monitoring and management activities.
- Conduct regular inspections to detect the introduction of any new pest plants or animals, and respond to threats as necessary within a regional program for the management of priority pest plant and animal species.
- Encourage research that supports an improved understanding of the effects of climate change on water dependant species.

## Theme 3: Providing a unique and sustainable visitor experience

Malkumba-Coongie Lakes National Park is a remote, undeveloped and distinctively outback destination. People visit the park to experience the outback, immerse themselves in nature and learn about the region's cultural layers through four-wheel drive touring and camping. Together with the Innamincka township and the Innamincka Regional Reserve, the park attracts visitors to the region from all over the world. It is anticipated that more people will visit this region in the future as a result of improvements to the Adventure Way between Brisbane and Innamincka.

Access to the park from Innamincka is via the Coongie Track (Figure 2). This four-wheel drive track is prone to inundation from the floodwaters of Cooper Creek and has been closed for extensive periods over recent years. Annual visitation to the park is not expected to increase significantly due to the remoteness of the park and the periodic closure of the Coongie Track. However as more people visit the region, the park is likely to experience larger and more frequent peaks in visitation. This could affect the remote and undeveloped qualities of the park unless carefully managed.

To encourage an appreciation and understanding of the park, information is provided for visitors at Innamincka and at the Coongie Lake Day Visitor Area (Figure 2). Important information about park values, safety and responsible behaviour is provided at the Australian Inland Mission building and information boards at Innamincka. All signs within the park and public information outside the park acknowledge the Yandruwandha and the Yawarrawarrka people as traditional owners. This information encourages an appreciation of Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka culture, the cultural authority of traditional owners, and their connection to country. To ensure that information is culturally appropriate, any public communication material containing cultural content will require the approval of a Yandruwandha and a Yawarrawarrka representative of the Yandruwandha Yawarrawarrka Parks Advisory Committee before publication or use.

There are basic facilities for visitors at Coongie Lake Day Visitor Area and Coongie Lake Camping Area (Figure 2) and there is also a short walking trail adjacent to the southern shore of Coongie Lake. Some members of the public have suggested the development of additional walking tracks, improved four-wheel drive access and expanded visitor facilities. The excessive development of facilities could detract from the

undeveloped and natural experiences that attract people to the park. In addition, the construction and maintenance of visitor facilities in this remote and flood prone setting is difficult.

Some small scale facility development is required at the Kudriemitchie Camping Area (Figure 2) to support minimal impact camping. Some additional, low key improvements to visitor facilities in the park may also be considered, however significant changes such as a major upgrade to Coongie Track will be avoided to ensure that the park remains a desirable and quiet destination for relatively low numbers of small, self-sufficient groups travelling by four-wheel drive.

Driving on the defined access tracks and camping within defined camping areas ensures that visitors do not inadvertently impact on fragile soils, vegetation and cultural sites. Existing camping areas are all located adjacent to Coongie Lake and Cooper Creek. Many of these are also close to cultural sites. It is likely that many unrecorded cultural sites are also located near tracks and camping areas. From time to time it may be necessary to relocate access tracks or camping areas to avoid flood waters, protect vegetation or avoid impacts on cultural sites. Once developed, a cultural heritage plan will help to guide this work. Site inspections will also be undertaken in conjunction with appropriate traditional owners, to ensure that the replacement and improvement of visitor facilities with the park does not destroy or diminish Aboriginal cultural values.

The prolonged collection of fallen timber for firewood, particularly within arid areas, reduces the available habitat for ground dwelling animals. Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka people may collect firewood within the Living and Camping Zone. The collection of firewood elsewhere is prohibited. Campfires are allowed at Kudriemitchie Camping Area, subject to seasonal restrictions. To minimise disturbance to visitors and wildlife, the use of generators is only allowed at the Kudriemitchie Camping Area and the Coongie Lake Camping Area and is restricted to daylight hours (9.00 am to 5.00 pm). They are also restricted to a capacity of 2 Kva and a maximum noise output of 65 dB at 7m.

Due to the remoteness of the park, preventing disturbance to water birds primarily depends on the informed and responsible behaviour of visitors. Visitors exploring the park by canoe or on foot will be encouraged to take appropriate precautions to avoid approaching bird roosting, feeding and breeding areas. To prevent the disturbance of waterbirds, bringing dogs into the park, intentionally disturbing wildlife or using motorised boats in the park is not allowed.

### Objectives and Strategies

Provide a sustainable visitor experience while minimising the impacts of visitor activity on park values.

- Ensure visitors are aware of their responsibilities for the protection of park values through appropriate information, including an information board at the entrance to the Coongie Lake Camping Area.
- Encourage visitors to have a minimal impact by keeping to vehicle tracks, bringing their own fire wood, camping in designated campsites, using the toilets provided (or portable toilets) and keeping away from known bird breeding sites.
- Support applications to conduct commercial tours in the park that:
  - are compatible with the values of the park, the objectives of this plan and relevant regulations; and
  - use culturally appropriate methods to communicate Yandruwandha and Yawarrawarrka culture (such as the use of a Yandruwandha or a Yawarrawarrka guide).
- Periodically review restrictions that apply to the use of campfires at the Kudriemitchie Camping Area and the restrictions that apply to the use of generators at Kudriemitchie Camping Area and the Coongie Lake Camping Area.





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# Appendix 1

## Rare or threatened flora and fauna

Flora species	Status: National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 SA
<i>Calandrinia stagnensis</i>	Rare
Matted Water Starwort ( <i>Callitriche sonderi</i> )	Rare
Downs Flat-sedge ( <i>Cyperus bifax</i> )	Rare
Flat Spike-rush ( <i>Eleocharis plana</i> )	Rare
<i>Frankenia cupularis</i>	Rare
Small Monkey-flower ( <i>Mimulus prostrates</i> )	Rare

Fauna species	Status: National Parks and Wildlife Act 1972 SA
Square-tailed Kite ( <i>Lophoictinia isura</i> )	Endangered
Magpie Goose ( <i>Anseranas semipalmata</i> )	Endangered
Flock Bronzewing ( <i>Phaps histrionica</i> )	Rare
Restless Flycatcher ( <i>Myiagra inquieta</i> )	Rare
Black-tailed Godwit ( <i>Limosa limosa</i> )	Rare
Yellow-bellied Sheath-tail bat ( <i>Saccolaimus flaviventris</i> )	Rare
Australasian Darter ( <i>Anhinga novaehollandiae</i> )	Rare
Wood Sandpiper ( <i>Tringa glareola</i> )	Rare
Glossy Ibis ( <i>Plegadis falcinellus</i> )	Rare
Spotless Crake ( <i>Porzana tabuensis</i> )	Rare
Musk Duck ( <i>Biziura lobata</i> )	Rare
Little Egret ( <i>Egretta garzetta</i> )	Rare
Great Crested Grebe ( <i>Podiceps cristatus</i> )	Rare
Knife-footed Frog ( <i>Cyclorana cultripes</i> )	Rare
Long-toed Stint ( <i>Calidris subminuta</i> )	Rare
Common Sandpiper ( <i>Actitis hypoleucos</i> )	Rare
Black-breasted Buzzard ( <i>Hamirostra melanosternon</i> )	Rare
Barking Owl ( <i>Ninox connivens</i> )	Rare
Australasian Shoveler ( <i>Anas rhynchos</i> )	Rare
Blue-billed Duck ( <i>Oxyura australis</i> )	Rare
Intermediate Egret ( <i>Ardea intermedia</i> )	Rare
Jacky Winter (south east subspecies) ( <i>Microeca fascians fascians</i> )	Rare
Brolga ( <i>Grus rubicunda</i> )	Vulnerable
Freckled Duck ( <i>Stictonetta naevosa</i> )	Vulnerable
Macquarie Tortoise ( <i>Emydura macquarii</i> )	Vulnerable
Australian Bustard ( <i>Ardeotis australis</i> )	Vulnerable



## 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.

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Communications Manager  
Department of Environment, Water and Natural Resources  
GPO Box 1047 Adelaide SA 5001

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