

Flourishing Nature Flourishing Culture

Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary
Strategy 2050





Warabin Bush Stone-curlew

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Dhawura Ngunnawal



Yuma

Dhawura Nguna Dhawura Ngunnawal

**Yanggu ngalawiri dhunimanyin Ngunnawalwari
dhawurawari**

Nginggada Dindi yindumaralidjinyin

Dhawura Ngunnawal yindumaralidjinyin

*Artwork by Richie Allan, Ngunnawal man and Sanctuary neighbour.
The Ngunnawal songline artwork depicts the stories that were
followed through Mulligans Flat. They flow from what is now west
Belconnen and finish at Lake George in the north.*

Hello,
This is Ngunnawal Country
Today we are meeting on Ngunnawal country
We always respect Elders, male and female
We always respect Ngunnawal Country

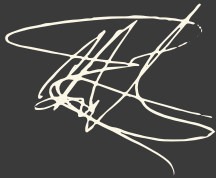
We acknowledge the Ngunnawal people as Canberra's first inhabitants and Traditional Custodians. We recognise the special relationship and connection that Ngunnawal people have with this Country. Prior to the dislocation of Ngunnawal people from their land, they were a thriving people whose life and culture was connected unequivocally to this land in a way that only they understand and know, and is core to their physical and spiritual being.

The segregation of the Ngunnawal people from Culture and Country has had long-lasting, profound and ongoing health and well-being effects on their life, cultural practices, families and continuation of their law/lore. We acknowledge the historic dispossession of the Ngunnawal people of Canberra and their surrounding regions. We recognise the significant contribution the Ngunnawal people have played in caring for Country. For time immemorial they have maintained a tangible and intangible cultural, social, environmental, spiritual and economic connection to these lands and waters.

Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee

Roslyn Brown

Co-Chair United Ngunnawal
Elders Council



Fred Monaghan

Co-Chair United Ngunnawal
Elders Council



Caroline Hughes

Co-Chair Dhawura Ngunnawal
Caring for Country Committee



Wally Bell

Member Dhawura Ngunnawal
Caring for Country Committee



**Minister Gentleman
MLA**

Minister for the Environment
and Heritage



Our Shared Future

This Strategy for the Sanctuary sets the direction and tone for a new phase of engagement, marked by a shared vision, clear objectives, a renewed partnership, stronger community engagement, enhanced management of natural and cultural heritage, and strengthening the Ngunnawal people's connection to Country.

**Minister Vassarotti
MLA**

Minister for the Environment



Professor Brian Schmidt

Vice-Chancellor and President
The Australian National University



Alison Russell-French

President
Woodlands and Wetlands Trust



Ian Walker

Conservator Flora and Fauna



Imagine 2050...

Bettongs and quolls scurrying through the night on Mt Majura woodlands and curlews calling out across Canberra – driven by community action

Our woodlands flourishing with abundant native wildflowers and wildlife not seen today

Ngunnawal culture is practiced and embedded into the management of the Sanctuary

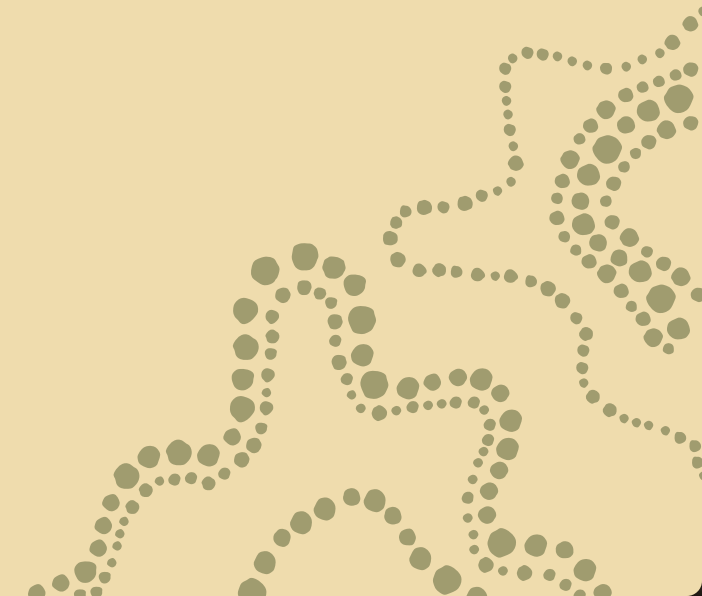
10 great ideas – generated from learning at the Sanctuary – helping to chart a healthy and biodiverse future for Australia

VISION

Flourishing Nature Flourishing Culture

Our Vision:

A thriving grassy woodland on the edge of Canberra: a place for nature, community, culture and learning to flourish.



Welcome to Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary

Ngunnawal connection to country for tens of thousands of years

Access to **1850** registered volunteers

22.8km of fox and cat proof fence



1278 hectare fenced area inspired by the local community

177 species of birds

Thriving populations of threatened species including Eastern Bettongs, Eastern Quolls, Bush Stone-curlews, Superb Parrots, and many more.

100,000 visitors annually

Long term woodland research experiment since 2005

Australia's first fox, cat, rabbit and hare free Sanctuary



1384 hectares of critically endangered Yellow Box-Red Gum Grassy Woodland



280 species of native plants

20 minutes from Australia's Parliament House

55 peer reviewed research publications



LOCATION

The Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary

The Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary is located in the Gungahlin area of Canberra, ACT, adjoining the north-east border between the ACT and NSW. The Sanctuary comprises the Mulligans Flat and Goorooyarroo Nature Reserves.

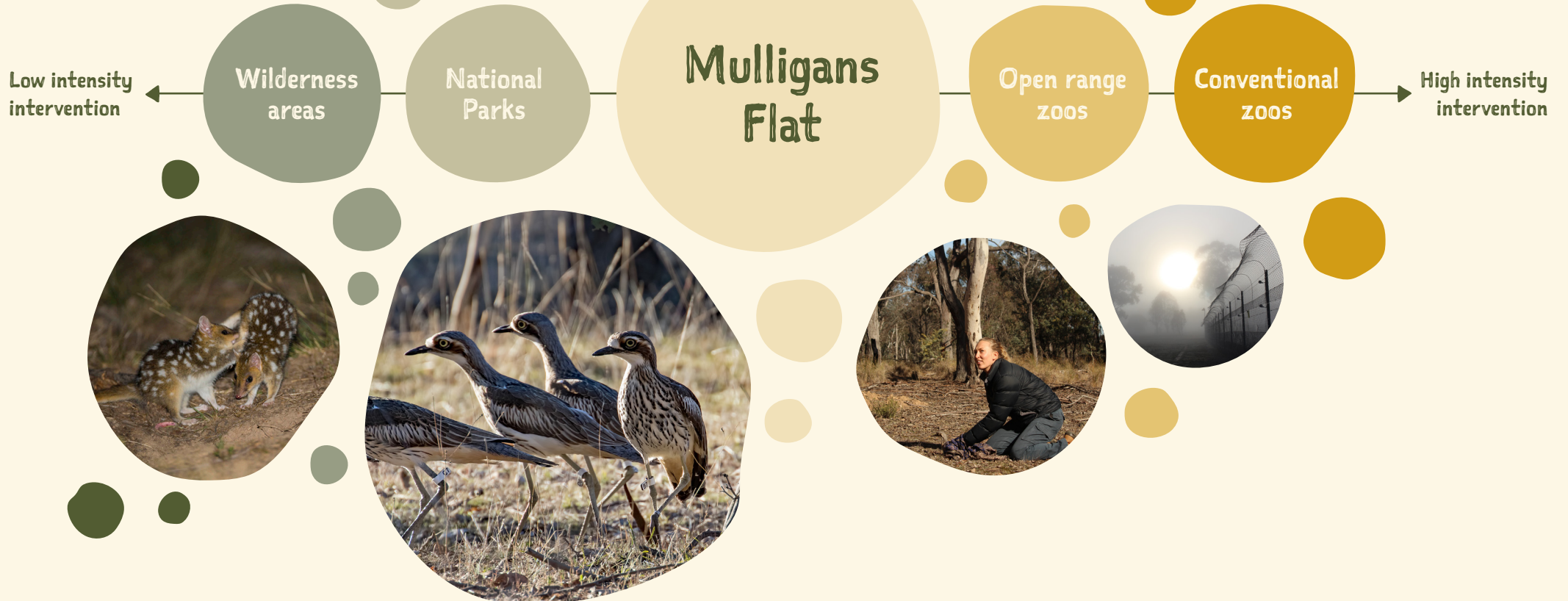
The Sanctuary has a conservation role far beyond its own borders. It generates world-class learning and lessons for other conservation efforts. In Mulligans Flat, reintroduced wildlife is highly protected from threats, and animals bred here may be shared with other sanctuaries to seed other populations and safeguard the species. In the longer term, the Sanctuary could also help our native fauna return to landscapes outside of the fox-proof fences. With the expansion of the Sanctuary into Goorooyarroo, new possibilities for experimentation and learning are opened up, that could progress the “pathway to the wild” for our native species. This new area will allow us to build on our knowledge of species reintroductions and could include challenging and ‘training’ populations to withstand pressures they will face beyond the fence. Central to the success of the pathway to the wild is an adaptive research program to inform each step of the journey.

- NSW/ACT border
- Water
- Main highways
- The Sanctuary
- Horse Park Drive
- Other reserves
- Fox & cat proof fence
- Wildbark Learning Centre
- Public access gate
- The Woolshed

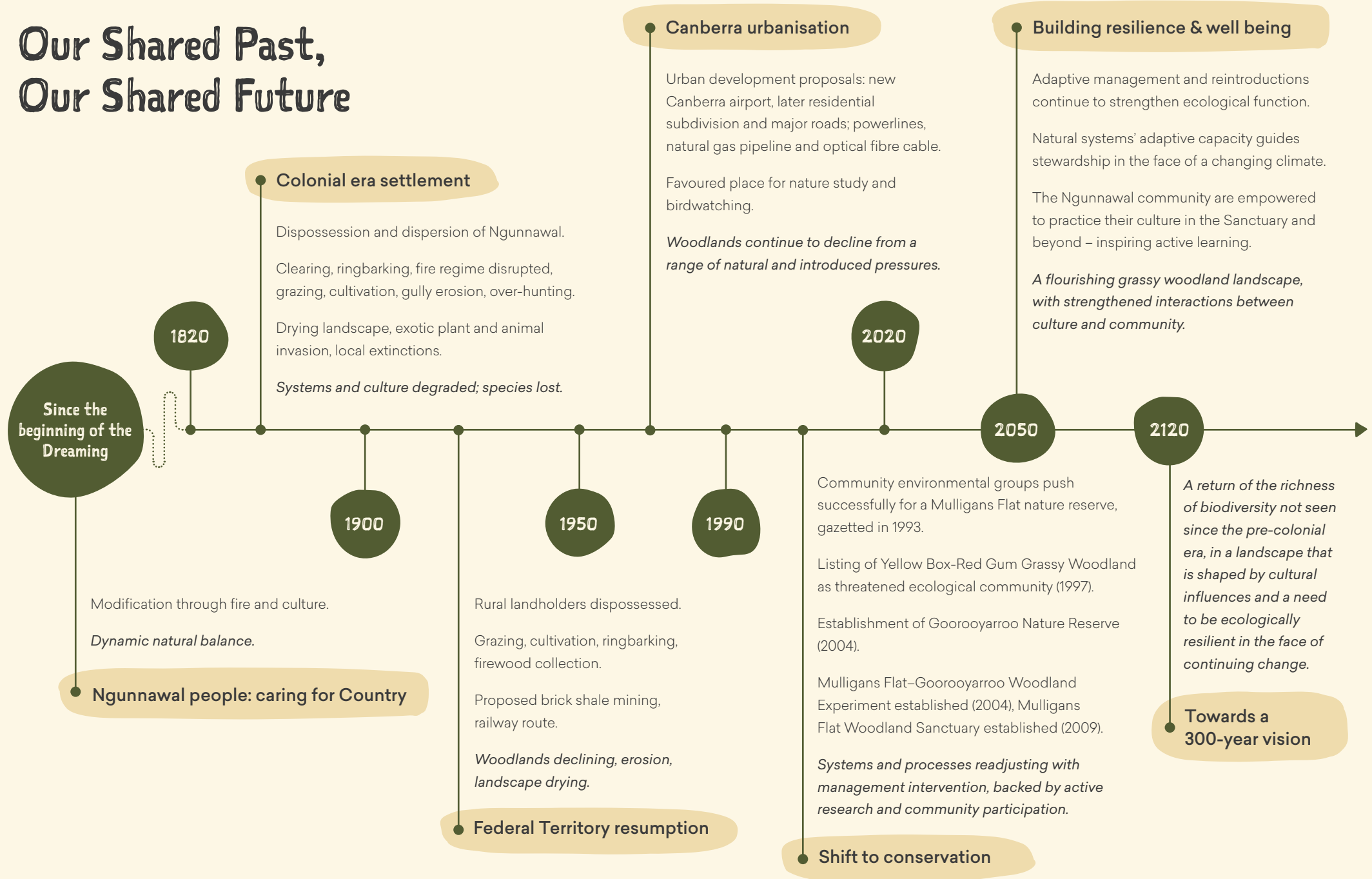


Our Place in Conservation

Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary sits within Canberra Nature Park as an urban nature reserve. It is managed for a range of values that require special ongoing attention unlike most wilderness areas. However animals within the Sanctuary are considered “wild” and are exposed to natural processes unlike zoos. The Wildbark Learning Centre is the gateway to Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary and provides us with a place to showcase some of the Sanctuary’s greatest assets.



Our Shared Past, Our Shared Future



Our Achievements

Over the past 27 years we have conceived, managed and delivered major innovations including:

Knowledge development and innovation

- Capturing and sharing data and information.
- Interdisciplinary research and enquiry.
- Building community awareness and involvement.

Community stewardship and science

- Community bird surveys by Canberra Ornithologists Group since 1995.
- Active community voice in planning and management.
- Community engagement in biodiversity surveying and citizen science.
- Friends of Mulligans Flat Park Care Group.

Outreach and education programs

- Outreach and education programs using innovative methods.
- Engagement of rural landholders across the NSW border to help enhance landscape connectivity.
- Evolution of the Wildbark Learning Centre as the key gateway to the Sanctuary.

Inspiring change and action

- Developing the capacity of students and Trust staff through Sanctuary internships, activities and the long term ecological experiment, helping to create future leaders.
- National and international interest generated in the Trust and Sanctuary.
- Strong and enduring partnerships between government, community, business and education.

Protecting and enhancing the values

- Recognising cultural and social values.
- 1278 hectares of Sanctuary enclosed in a fox and cat proof fence and eradication of foxes, cats, rabbits and hares.
- Reduction of exotic weeds, domestic stock and introduced pests.
- Enhancing ecological function through reintroducing species and fostering natural regimes.

Fostering adaptive management

- Building of a world-class ecological laboratory to inform evidence-based conservation.
- Shaping expectations for restoration and level of investment required.
- Learning by doing; with strong volunteer participation.
- Lessons learned being applied elsewhere in Australia.

Building knowledge through research

- The ANU led long term innovative woodland ecology experiment; now extended to sociology and science communication.
- Ground-breaking research in reintroduction biology and ecosystem management.
- Research to expand understanding of community connection to history and cultural heritage of the Sanctuary area.

Sharing knowledge

- Embedding cultural reconciliation that includes the empowerment of the Ngunnawal community.
- Developing citizen science and learning programs for all ages.
- Working with Ngunnawal community to share knowledge e.g. 'Kids on Country'.

Creating opportunities for Community Engagement

- Community participation strengthened by building a sense of place, identity, and collective ownership and stewardship.
- Infrastructure to support community engagement.
- Access for nature-based recreation.

Our Principles

In making decisions and undertaking actions we are guided by these principles:

Promoting wellbeing of the community, volunteers, and our staff.

We gauge our success and our legacy against the domains and indicators of wellbeing in the ACT Wellbeing Framework. This will help us understand our impact on the life of Canberrans and Australians.

We communicate openly and clearly about what we are doing and learning, and how we are adapting.

Fostering innovation, creating the confidence to try and fail, and inspiring transformative management of landscapes and ecosystems.

We understand that all aspects of the Sanctuary are to some extent an experiment, so we are driven by questions and possibilities, and we are 'learning by doing'.

We undertake and share research to inform evidence-based management.

Partnering with the community to build community health and well-being.

We willingly accept our role as landscape curators - collaborating to research, share and communicate - being active and creative in caring for nature, culture and community.

Applying the best available information in decision making including Ngunnawal knowledge, scientific understanding, and citizen science with the broader community.

We develop, apply and share the best available science and knowledge, and welcome the perspectives and insights of others to strengthen our learning.

Integrating Ngunnawal knowledge and practice to connect community to Country and to restore ecological function.

We affirm the traditional custodians, the Ngunnawal peoples' identity; embrace and support their connection and cultural belonging to the Mulligans Flat landscape; and embed and value their knowledge and cultural practices to support their social, spiritual and economic participation at Mulligans Flat.

We respect the importance of the place to the people and the importance of the people to the place.

Acting as stewards to protect and enhance ecosystem function and cultural landscapes.

We accept our responsibility as stewards of the Sanctuary, acting on behalf of future generations in addition to today's community: as we restore nature, we restore people.

We are changing the public face of science, communicating its importance as an agent of change in direction and behaviour, and as a guide to stewardship and responsibility.

Embedding adaptive management, facilitating successful adaptation in a changing climate using innovation and rigorous science.

We anticipate and respond strategically to environmental, social and economic trends and changes.

Flourishing Nature Flourishing Culture

Over coming decades we will be guided by our Vision, facing challenges such as climate change, while building resilient ecosystems through our strong research, management, cultural and community initiatives embedded in our three pillars.

Nature and culture in and around the Sanctuary has dramatically changed over the past 200 years, and we can never turn the clock back. Through learning we are on a voyage of healing and discovery, reflecting the realities of climate change and modified ecosystems, seizing opportunities in the complex natural and human systems within which we work.



Pillar 1

Restoring the wellbeing of nature, people and communities



Pillar 2

Learning about nature



Pillar 3

Inspiring change to benefit future generations

A thriving grassy woodland on the edge of Canberra: a place for nature, community, culture and learning to flourish

2030

The Ngunnawal community are empowered to practice their culture in the Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary tells the story of effective restoration and promotes what is possible.
Re-introductions are successful; ecosystem condition and function has improved.

Research and innovation underpin a learning culture.
Knowledge and involvement through citizen science.

The Sanctuary provides inspiration to the community and visitors; influencing policy and practice.

2050

Ngunnawal culture is embedded into management of the sanctuary.

The Sanctuary is a flourishing grassy woodland teeming with re-introduced species, a model for adapting to a changing climate.

The Sanctuary is recognised nationally and internationally as a centre of research and management excellence, influencing policy and practice.

The community actively supports extending the biodiversity of the Sanctuary throughout natural areas of Canberra.



Pillar 1

Restoring the wellbeing of nature, people and communities

Species re-introductions are successful, helping to improve ecosystem function and create a flourishing grassy woodland landscape. We proactively curate flora and fauna to reduce pressures on ecosystems and provide optimal habitats in a changing climate. Community well being depends on healthy ecosystems.

We tell the story of effective restoration, promote what is possible, and establish links with the surrounding landscape. The community responds, expecting improved biodiversity throughout the natural areas of Canberra and surrounds.

What we are working towards – In 2050:

We are nationally and internationally recognised and valued as a leader in creating flourishing landscapes – rebuilding natural and cultural values, systems and processes to become more resilient despite complex threatening processes such as a changing climate.

We bring Ngunnawal knowledge and western science together to create contemporary practices that support and acknowledge Ngunnawal cultural and traditional land management practices. We value the Ngunnawal people's traditional land management practices which will support the conservation pillars of Mulligans Flat.

Our woodlands, forests and grasslands are some of the best-understood ecosystems in Australia, due to world-class adaptive research and monitoring in the 'outdoor laboratory'. Our success provides valuable lessons and guidance for other places, showing what can be achieved through curating based on research evidence, at a landscape and whole-system scale.

Reintroduced native fauna have established themselves beyond the Sanctuary's fox and cat proof fence, with strong support from local and regional communities. Linking with the landscape has inspired changes to ecosystem management beyond the fence, bringing a welcome diversity into our landscapes.

Our work engages the broader community to understand and act for the environment, helping to restore health and wellbeing to the community. We help bring social benefits, mental health benefits, and individual restoration through inclusion, learning, changed perceptions, ignited passion, and motivation to act.



New Holland Mouse



Pillar 2

Learning about nature

Since its inception the Sanctuary has been a place of learning and research, changing how people think about and interact with woodlands. Understanding how people relate to nature shapes our programs. Outreach affirms the Sanctuary as a place of thinking and learning about the environment; strengthened by citizen science programs and contribution of expertise from the broader community.

Sharing and learning about culture is fundamental to our vision. We empower the Ngunnawal people to share and implement their cultural knowledge and practices ensuring Ngunnawal culture and values enhance the Sanctuary ethos and become embedded into management and decision-making.

Research and innovation will continue to underpin our learning culture with the research agenda consolidating and expanding across disciplines. Data and knowledge are shared and integrated into management priorities. The Sanctuary is recognised internationally as a model of research and management excellence.

What we are working towards – In 2050:

The Sanctuary is widely recognised and valued highly as a place of education, learning and thinking – both as an outdoor laboratory and an outdoor classroom. It is firmly established as a must-experience place for both residents and visitors across all seasons.

Schools from the local region and beyond visit to experience being up-close to flourishing nature, and to learn about the long history of Aboriginal and European interaction with the natural world. The Ngunnawal community practice their culture in the Sanctuary, actively participate in managing the Sanctuary, building knowledge of Ngunnawal people, Country and culture.

Students and researchers from Australian and international institutions come to see and participate in world-class research as it continues to unlock secrets and mysteries guiding us to a better future.

Much of our work is 'learning by doing', and it changes the ecosystem and processes over time including in our environmental offset areas, so we are constantly innovative and adaptive in our stewardship of natural and cultural resources and values.

The Wildbark Learning Centre is a much-loved community facility and meeting place, education and research centre, and a gateway to inspirational learning about nature. Reinforcing this, the Centre and its grounds are held up as a model of best practice in sustainability.



Ngaluda, Eastern Bettong



Pillar 3

Inspiring change to benefit future generations

The Sanctuary experience...

provides inspiration to community and visitors

guides local and regional policy and practice

influences national and international policy and practice

What we are working towards – In 2050:

We influence people's perception of nature and culture – not just while they are visiting the Sanctuary, but across all aspects of their lives and across their lifetimes.

We provide renowned cultural, nature-based, and heritage-based experiences which build awareness, understanding and support locally, nationally and internationally.

People have a better understanding of historical and contemporary Ngunnawal culture and feel inspired by the strength of the connection to people, Country, and culture.

We engage and help to inspire people to act for the environment, adapt to a changing climate and build hope in future generations.

Our success is built on the efforts of highly committed people, in our highly capable and enthusiastic staff and volunteers, and our partners. Together we help to build local, national and international support to sustain and extend conservation efforts – both here and elsewhere.

Innovative models for funding and partnership demonstrate the potential of linking environmental, social, cultural and financial sustainability, with benefits flowing to local and regional communities and beyond.

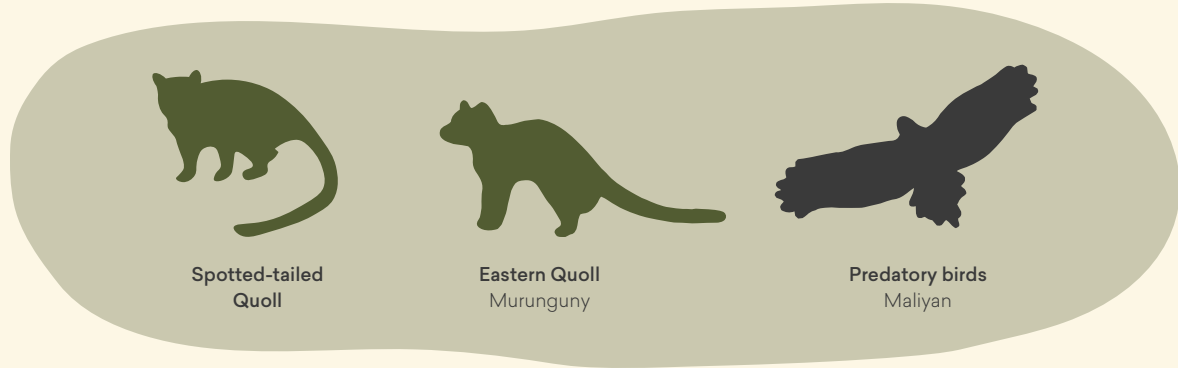
The Sanctuary is internationally renowned as a conservation effort sustained by collaborative stewardship. Essential to this is a strong and enduring partnership between traditional custodians the Ngunnawal people, government, local and regional communities, research and education institutions, and business sector supporters, united in respecting and caring for the environment that sustains us all.



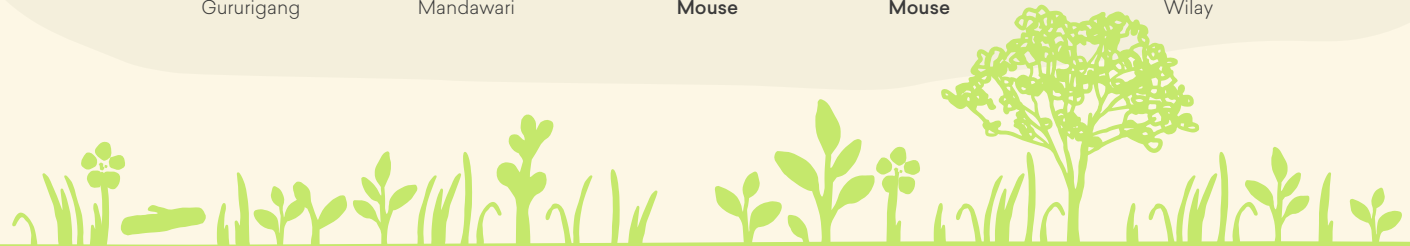
Species re-introductions strengthen ecosystem function

We have embarked on a journey to enhance biodiversity, building a more resilient ecosystem within the Sanctuary and beyond. Thinking about the plants and animals in the Sanctuary as a 'food web', represents feeding relationships within the ecosystem and shows the transfer of food energy from plants through herbivores to carnivores. Reintroduction of new species and management of native animals and plants is the next step in reinforcing a functional food web across the landscape.

Most ecosystem condition benchmarks for Box Gum Grassy Woodlands are focused on vegetation and were developed in the absence of ecosystem engineers and keystone species, such as top order predators and small to medium sized mammals. In areas of degraded grassland and woodland we will restore ecosystem function, harnessing ecological processes informed by our research and land management programs.



- Tertiary consumers
- Secondary consumers
- Primary consumers
- Animals we have reintroduced
- Existing animals
- Animals we will consider for reintroduction
- Resource pool – plants, seeds, fruit, nectar, flowers, logs, leaf litter, carrion



Who we are

The Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary is managed by a partnership that binds together the ACT Government, the Woodlands and Wetlands Trust (‘the Trust’), and The Australian National University (ANU), with input from the community.

As partners we collaborate to deliver the vision of Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary. At the same time, each partner brings specific skills, expertise and resources.

The Dhawura Ngunnawal Committee will engage, connect and work with the Environment Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate (EPSDD) to identify and implement cultural understanding within the Directorate and to provide guidance, direction and decisions on environmental and land management matters including land, fire, air and water to better manage Ngunnawal Country together on EPSDD managed lands.

The ACT Government leads operational management and is responsible for conserving, researching, managing and presenting the natural and cultural environments of the Territory, and supporting ParkCare volunteer programs.

The Trust leads on engaging with the community to build better understanding and awareness of the importance of the Sanctuary and the natural environment. By encouraging active participation by community groups and citizens in projects and activities in the Sanctuary, the Trust aims to build a stronger sense of ownership for the Sanctuary and appreciation of its unique value in representing the natural world in an urban setting. The Trust also takes a leading role in engaging with business and corporate sector fundraising to support the Sanctuary and in community engagement through education, recreation and tourism.

ANU leads research programs at the intersection of studies in ecology and biodiversity, science communication and society-nature relations to develop long-term, whole-system insights on species reintroductions in particular, and the Mulligans Flat-Goorooyarroo Woodland Experiment more broadly. Most recently this is being made possible by an exciting new collaboration, featuring interdisciplinary researchers based in world-class science, social science and humanities areas.

As partners we also work collaboratively with the community – the local residents, the volunteers, the members of community groups and schools. They provide a huge source of ideas, energy and ambition for the future of the Sanctuary.

Delivering the Strategy

Within our strong management partnership everyone has an important role to play. The Strategy draws upon the overarching framework for reserve management in the ACT to set the direction. **Subsequent 5-year implementation plans will provide guidance for decision-making, on-ground action, and adaptive management. The implementation plans will set out real actions and indicators that move us towards achieving our shared future.**

The most important part of the Strategy is you. Drop into the Wildbark Learning Centre in Throsby to speak to one of our friendly staff or volunteers to find out how you can become involved.

Mulligans Flat Woodland Sanctuary

Tour enquiries:

0428 224 904 (during office hours)

tours@woodlandsandwetlands.org.au

mulligansflat.org.au

The partners recognise the inspiration of Zealandia, Wellington, NZ in developing our Sanctuary and Strategy.



Photo credits: Cover page: Betong: Adam McGrath, Woodlands: Adam Burchart, People planting: Elsie Percival. **Contents:** Bush Stone-curlew: Julie Clark. **Ngunnawal Country:** Artwork by Richie Allen. **Vision:** Gum leaves: Elsie Percival. **Highlights:** Quoll: Charles Davis, Yam daisy: Jason Cummings, Bettong: Adam McGrath, Woodlands: Woodlands & Wetlands Trust. **Conservation Position:** Quollettes: Charles Davis, Bush Stone-curlew: Julie Clark, Scarlet Robin: Julie Clark, Sanctuary: Milou Hofman, Emily Belton with bird: Elsie Percival, White-winged Chough: Julie Clark, Fox and cat proof fence: Adrian Manning, Woman holding bettong: Elsie Percival. **Achievements:** Foggy Woodlands: Adrian Manning. **Pillar 1:** New Holland Mouse: Doug Beckers. **Pillar 2:** Eastern Bettong: Woodlands & Wetlands Trust. **Pillar 3:** Misty mountains: Woodlands & Wetlands Trust. **About Us:** Woodlands: Adam Burchart. **Contact Us:** Superb Parrot: Julie Clark.

The process of selecting the latest list of priority species for reintroduction was supported by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science Program through the Threatened Species Recovery Hub.