

# WELCOME TO WIDJABUL COUNTRY

Jingi walla blagganmirr Widjabul na Jogun ba la

The water catchment of Emigrant Creek Dam is located in the land of the Widjabul people. The local Aboriginal people of this area are the **Widjabul** tribe, who are a part of the **Bundjalung Nation**. Widjabul people have lived in this area for many thousands of years and cared for the country. This land, and the water that flows through it, is sacred to them.

## Their message to people visiting this place

### Widjabul jogun

Ngali ngah ngih gala jogun  
Ngali ganj garima gala jogun  
Wana jangma mala gunu gala jogun  
Ngali ganj wana jangah gala jogun  
Ngali ngah ngih gala jogun

### Bunjalung jogun

Ngali na jugun  
Ngali garima mala jugun  
Wana janma mala gunu gala jugun  
Ngali wana janja mala jugun  
Ngali na mala jugun

## BUNDJALUNG COUNTRY

*We belong this country  
We look after this country  
Don't do wrong around here this country  
We don't harm this country here  
We belong to it this country*

### BUNDJALUNG ELDERS

'Bundjalung Country' was first written by elders from Baryulgil, part of the Bundjalung nation. It was translated into Wi-abul language by Widjabul elders.



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## Our responsibility to water

(Spoken by R.C. Gordon, Widjabul descendant and linguist)

*Everyone knows their place by the stories handed down to them from the creation. The creation was a significant period in explaining the laws to man, and his place in the cycle of life. This cycle of life represents his role as custodian, or as a caretaker, to the land, the environment and people. We as people must be mindful of our place in this process. This process applies to all of us.*

*Just like the blood that runs through our veins, to keep us alive and sustain us through our daily lives, so is water important, not just for us as humans but for the environment we live in, the animals that we care for, and for the food that is provided to us.*

*The main source of water for our people was the spring water. The people had a responsibility to care for that water. Water was shared with the animals. Water was shared by everyone. Water didn't belong to anyone. Everyone was responsible for that water.*

*There was, and there still is, a spirit of the waterhole. Be mindful.*

*No-one can live without water.*

*"Leave that water place clean.  
Respect that water place for the animals,  
the people and the environment.  
Do not **disturb** that water place.  
Cause that water place **sustains** us. It keeps us.  
Do not **rubbish** or **pollute** that water place  
because we are polluting ourselves  
the pollution of these places.  
That is what's happening.*

*The animals, the spirits, the trees, people,  
we all have our place here  
But it's **understanding** our place in the cycle  
and being **responsible** for that place of that cycle  
that keeps us going.*

*Not the **power** of man  
not the **power** of machinery  
But the significance of the environment we live in  
is what sustain us and keep us here*

*Our people were always **mindful** of these places  
to protect and look after them  
because they **knew** there was a tomorrow  
and when that tomorrow come  
they knew there would be **children**  
and them **children** had to have a place  
And we must always keep these places for the future  
for without these places we cannot teach our children  
about the importance of **us**, to our **countries**  
or one each other."*

**R.C. Gordon**

"We ask you to respect, care for and learn about this place"

**“Without the animals, there’d be no us, and without the water there’d be no us. Without the trees there’d be no us. Be mindful! Garrima!”**

## This Place Around Here

*The significance of that place in the surrounding hills is the movement of people through country, from one country to another.*

*It was a very popular movement place for people along the ridgelines, from the inland to the coast.*

*All the ridgelines are very significant in the sense that it was a lot easier travelling than down along the creeks and the waterways through all the scrubs, this and that. Up on the ridgelines it was a lot easier and quicker to move along.*

*Primarily, most plains, flats, general areas were only approached and used in them times of needs or camps. They weren’t permanent setting places.*

*Mindful of that respect for animals, their relationship to country, and to know that they have a right to that place too. And that they responsible to that place too.*

*Do not dismiss the animals, cause they just as responsible for that place as we are. And without the animals, there’d be no us, and without the water there’d be no us. Without the trees, there’d be no us. That’s why it’s always “Be mindful!”*

*“Garrima!” “Garrima!” that’s the main thing with it. “Garrima!”*

R.C. Gordon

*“The animals, the spirits, the trees, people, we all have our place here”*

## GADJE BA JOGUN. THE HUNTING GROUND.

(Conversation between Sheldon Harrington Snr., Widjabul descendant and artist, and Eshana, author of the info sheet series, about his painting ‘Gadje ba Jogun’)

**Sheldon:** *I’d like to explain a bit about the painting.*

*It represents... the black dots mean rocks. The curved line with strikes represent the cliffs. Dots leading into the bush and down to the watering hole, that’s where the Aboriginal people go and hunt their food. And you got Aboriginal people standing around the watering hole, which is where there is plenty of food in the watering hole. You got the bingghing (turtle), you got the jalum (which is the fish). You got animal footprints around the camp-site: kangaroos and wallabies, birds, porcupines, goannas. You got dingo footprints. You got the wild cat one (striped quoll).*

*And you got, on the left hand side of the watering hole, you got the greenish yellow, that represents the sand, water. And down the other end, you got the reeds, the grass in it, where the catfish is.*

*It’s where the Aboriginal people gather because there’s plenty of, as we say “nunginy” which means food in the watering hole, and plenty of hunting around, which is a very sacred place for the Aboriginal people.*

*Aboriginal people standing around with their spears and watching out and looking out for animals. There are males and females there.*

*I mainly do stick figures because they’re easy to understand. The men are holding the spears.*

*The campsite is on the top part of the painting, because they look to get out of the wind and that. So when they build their gunyahs, they build it so the wind will go over the gunyah, so that they keep warm. And it’s nice and flat there. They’re protected there under the cliffs in case something goes wrong, storms and that.*

*The dried up water beds are towards the bottom of the painting. The round ones are the big solid rocks in the ground.*

*Above the watering hole in the painting, they gather sticks up so if they get their food they got the fire already. The sticks are already there. Save them going out in the night going looking for sticks. Everything’s there piled up but it’s not alight.*

*Them little dots are where they go hunting, that’s their walking track where they go hunting because they know where the food is. Probably gather down there maybe three or four times a year so they don’t clear the area out. They only take what they need. With the food, and let the food population build up over that time.*

*If you travel up and down the rivers, you will see a lot of fires along the rivers. You see some places burnt out. That way they burned the old stuff out, and they’ll regenerate everything back, let the population grow back, and it comes back nice and fresh then. And they know where to come”.*





**Eshana:** So, in the place where the dam is now, were there water holes where this was happening?

**Sheldon:** Yeh, they'll probably come there and meet in that place there. Men and women and children. They'll probably go from there down to the coast and they'll go down and get all their fish, all their coast food and other stuff like shellfish, the pippis and that down there. They'll go down there and get that sort of food and then they'll come back here to the bush and then they'll make their way home.

If the food's all scarce and that, then they won't go there until it regenerates.

Back in them days, there were no buildings, there was nothing. There was only just a walking track and they knew which way to go and where to hunt. We know where to go and not to go.

It just shows you what's in the area down there.

The dark green is all the forests and the trees and vegetation. The brown is like the earth and that. I used the colours to represent the significant things of the area, the colours of the trees without drawing the trees in it. That's what it all represents, so it looks like the rainforest there, and you can see the footprints coming out from underneath the trees. Late in the afternoon, about 2 or 3 in the afternoon, that's when the animals start coming out. It's not so hot then, and they can eat their food and go down for a drink of water.

And you've got the turtle shell there. Turtles only float on top. If you look from the air, or you climb a tree and look down on the water and if it's a dark hole down here, you can't see the turtles neck or their fins or nothing. All you can see is their shell, and you think, "What's this shell floating here?" and you can dive in and you got your food. That's how we do it, you see.

Same with the fish and they use their spears and that, which has three prongs. And when they see a fish they are very still and they just go and hit it. They have a special skill. They know when the timing's right.

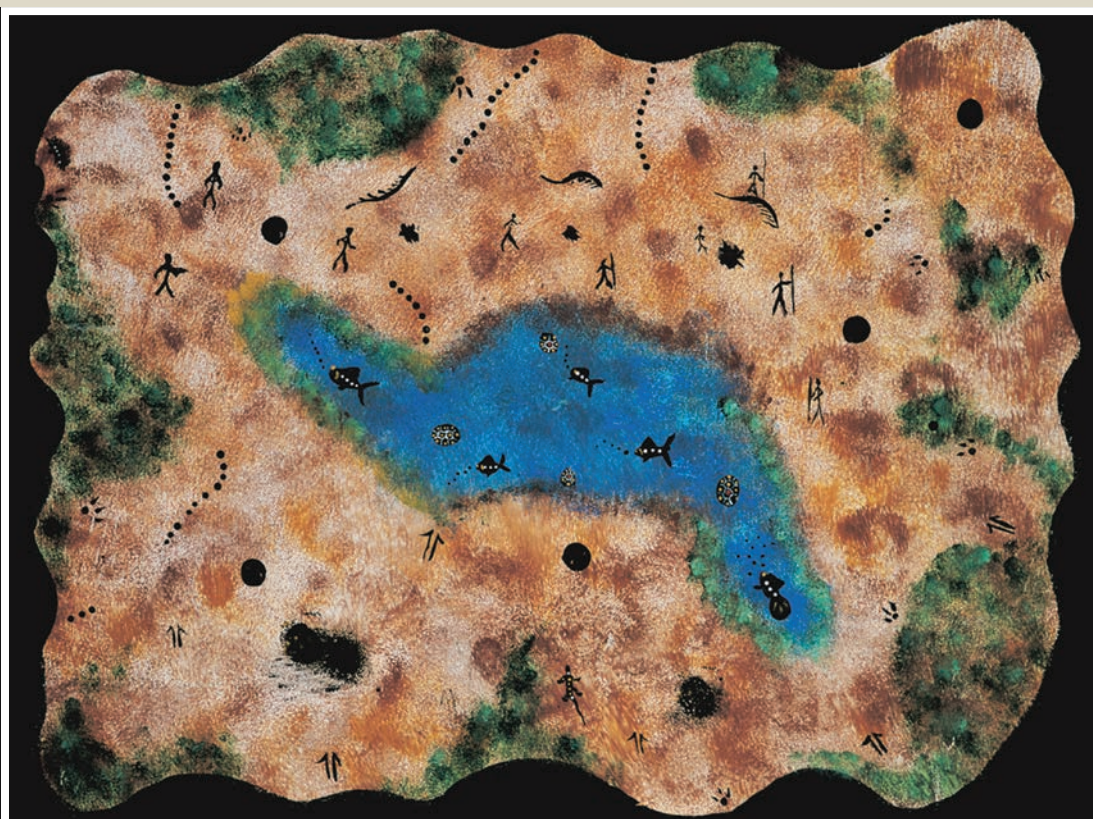
The catfish is good to eat but a lot of bones. To get the skin off is very hard. These days you use pliers. Back in them days they used their teeth or got a sharp rock and just cut it and used their teeth.

The turtle's different. You got the turtle eggs inside the females. You've got the buck, the male, and the mammi, the female. You got the eggs in the mammis and they're like yolk, like a normal egg.

How we cook it, we just lay them on their backs, then we take the eggs out and push the eggs back in, and cook the turtles in their own juice, and we drink the juice or dip the damper in it, or whatever. We eat the eggs and everything. It's nice. Real nice.

I only draw what animals we mainly eat. There are some animals I am not allowed to draw under traditional lore.

"Our people were always mindful of these places, to protect and look after them, because they knew there was a tomorrow"



ECHIDNA



WALLABIES



BIRD



DOG/CAT

## TRY THIS!

Learn  
with your...

"Why do you think it is important to care for this land and water? How do the Widjabul elders' reasons for caring for this land and water compare to your reasons? (How are they different? How are they the same?)



"If you are not an Aboriginal person, try to imagine that you are. Your ancestors have been connected to this land for many thousands of years. You know what this land was like before white people came here. What was it like? [pause] Take a look around you now. What do you see that is different? [pause] How do you feel? What are your hopes? What are you concerned about?"



"As you take your next steps on your walk, imagine that your ancestors have been living in this land for many thousands of years. As you walk along, notice what has changed over that time. What has stayed the same? Try walking along the path as if it was a track in the painting 'The Hunting Ground'. What would you be seeing and hearing? What would you be looking for? What would you have in your hands?"

**Learning objective:** To understand the Widjabul context of the catchment. To acknowledge and appreciate the traditional ownership of this place by the Widjabul people of the Bundjalung Nation. To understand the mutual responsibility that government agencies and Widjabul elders have for this land and water. To feel welcomed to the site, but also understand that there are conditions on that welcome.

**Together, Rous County Council and Widjabul elders of the Bundjalung Nation welcome everyone onto the Water Walk to view Emigrant Creek Dam and explore the rainforest.**

Custodianship and  
Land Management

The land around Emigrant Creek Dam is managed by Rous County Council, Ballina Shire Council and private landholders but the Widjabul are the traditional owners.

They have a cultural responsibility as custodians of this land.

Increasingly, Widjabul people are taking part in planning and decision-making about the local area, managing natural resources and educating people about the values of land and water.

The Water Walk is one example of this, where Widjabul people have worked alongside Rous County Council to create the words and images for this series of signs.

The message is the same from the Widjabul elders and from Rous County Council.

**"We ask you to respect, care for  
and learn about this special place."**

**Joon ba na blagganmirr ngalibeh  
Garima ba, Garima gu Wadje li ah  
gala Djagi mah.**

This means being careful and aware on your walks here in the catchment. It also means getting involved in caring for the catchment, protecting water quality and conserving water.

How can you do this? The sign at the top of the hill about saving water will give you a few ideas, but also visit our very last sign on the Water Walk. (This is on your way back to the carpark, on the inside of the 'Look Listen and Learn' sign. (See also *Info Sheet 9: Water Conservation and Info Sheet 17: Make a Difference.*)

Together, Rous County Council and Widjabul elders of the Bundjalung Nation welcome everyone onto the Water Walk to view Emigrant Creek Dam and down the track to Killen Falls.

**Disclaimer:** Rous County Council and the Widjabul elders and descendants have entered into this relationship, primarily to do with signage and the importance of water to country and people. The contract between Widjabul elders and descendants and Rous County Council primarily deals with the need for all of us to look after water as people.

This working relationship is about Rous County Council acknowledging the ancestry, heritage, country, identity and language of the people from this country.

This is a community education and reconciliation project. We are working together for future generations to make Australia a better place.

This work does not impact on Native Title claims or claimants.



**For further information contact:**

**Rous County Council**

**02 6623 3800 [www.rous.nsw.gov.au](http://www.rous.nsw.gov.au)**

These information sheets were originally prepared for Rous County Council by Sustainable Futures Australia in liaison with Widjabul elders. © Rous County Council and Sustainable Futures Australia 2007. This is an educational project for the protection of water land, and for reconciliation.

All information provided is done so in good faith, but on the basis that Rous County Council and its consultants are not liable for any damage or loss that may occur in relation to this information.

