

## **Mawonga dedication ceremony realises long-held dream of managing *ngurrampaa* (country)**

Wednesday, 16 June 2021

More than 100 Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan people and their families have celebrated the long-held dream of having *ngurrampaa* (country) back in their management in a dedication ceremony for the Mawonga Indigenous Protected Area (IPA), in central-western New South Wales.

The IPA means that Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan people will be able to continue the role of their ancestors by caring for and healing country at the 22,000-hectare Mawonga Station IPA, 100km north of Hillston, NSW.

There are numerous cultural places, small caves, rock shelters and art sites on Mawonga, as well as many significant plants and animals such as threatened *Yungkey* (Malleefowl) and woodland birds like the Grey-Crowned Babbler and Hooded Robin.

Mawonga IPA adjoins both the Yathong and Nombinnie nature reserves and the three properties combined form one of the largest continuous stands of protected Mallee Forest in NSW.

Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan people have been actively managing Mawonga for ten years, continuing to care for their *ngurrampaa* as a place of ceremony, family gathering and teaching as it was in the past. Regular cultural camps are held at the property to share cultural knowledge, protection of cultural sites and language. The recent release of [Ngiyampaa Wordworld](#) resource supports this.

Feral animal management has seen a significant decrease in goat numbers and a reduction in foxes and cats, while ecological monitoring is helping to capture the changes in the health of the plants and animals through this management.

### **Mawonga Station IPA Manager Lawrence Clark said:**

*“Having your country back to care for, it’s like caring for family. If country is looking sick you look after it, heal it, like you do when caring for sick family. Having Mawonga, our country, for community as a place to be for our connection and wellbeing is so important. It’s protecting our past and our future.”*

*“I’ve seen big changes since 2011 in country, there used to be very little ground cover here, many feral animals and invasive weeds. Now there are a lot less ferals and more native species, healthier woodlands and more birds.”*

Managing country as an IPA has been a goal of Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan people for many years. In 2011, their representative body Winangakirri Aboriginal Corporation (WAC) acquired Mawonga after the federal government, through the National Reserve System program and the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation, provided funds to buy the property.

### **Mawonga IPA Coordinator Stacey O’Hara said:**

*“Being declared an IPA is the culmination of many years of hard work by members of Winangakirri Aboriginal Corporation. There has been a lot of setbacks and disappointment over the years, but to finally see all our efforts yield results is an indescribable feeling of accomplishment and one that we should all be so proud of.”*

*“The support from Bush Heritage Australia, Biodiversity Conservation Trust and Western Local Land Services over the years has been amazing and truly appreciated by our members. We look forward to many years of managing our own Country for current and future generations of Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan people.”*

A handback ceremony was held in 2015, when Mawonga was divested to WAC and a management plan subsequently developed, enabling Mawonga to become an IPA.

National not-for profit Bush Heritage Australia congratulated Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan people in this achievement, having worked in partnership with them to realise their vision for country for more than a decade.

Bush Heritage supported the 2011 acquisition of Mawonga and worked with the community in the development of the Mawonga IPA Management plan. Bush Heritage will continue to support management and ecological monitoring activities on Mawonga.

**Bush Heritage’s Aboriginal Partnerships Officer for south-eastern Australia Sarah Eccles, who has worked alongside Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan people in this journey, said:**

*“The dedication is a historic day for Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan Traditional Owners long in the making. It’s been the commitment and resilience of Ngiyampaa people through many challenges that sees country back in their management.”*

*“Mawonga is thriving under the care of Ngiyampaa Wangaaypuwan people. Seeing the happiness in families back on country, having a safe space to practice and share culture, to see cultural places, species and resources looked after by community is what working together can make happen.”*

**[Download images of the dedication ceremony and Mawonga Station IPA here.](#)**