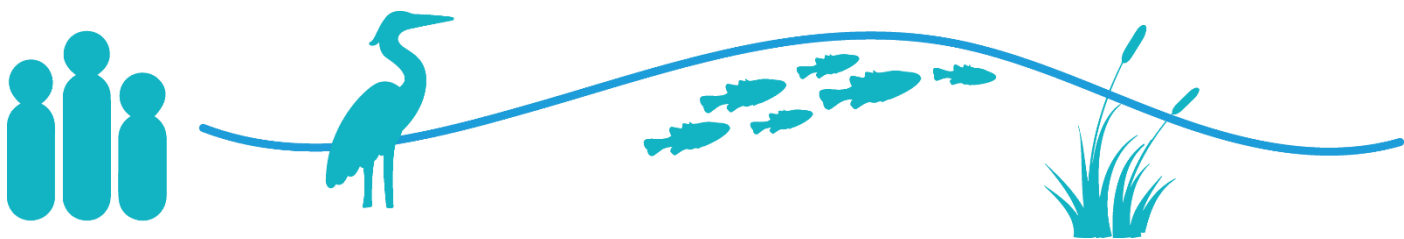


# FIRST NATIONS ENGAGEMENT PLAN

**The Coorong, Lower Lakes, and Murray Mouth (CLLMM)  
Research Centre: First Nations Engagement Plan 2023–  
26. DRAFT**





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## Respect and reconciliation

Aboriginal people are the First Peoples and Nations of South Australia. The Coorong, connected waters and surrounding lands have sustained unique First Nations cultures since time immemorial.

The Goyder Institute for Water Research acknowledges the range of First Nations' rights, interests and obligations for the Coorong and connected waterways and the cultural connections that exist between Ngarrindjeri Nations and First Nations of the South-East peoples across the region and seeks to support their equitable engagement.

Aboriginal peoples' spiritual, social, cultural, and economic practices come from their lands and waters, and they continue to maintain their cultural heritage, economies, languages, and laws which are of ongoing importance.

**Warning:** Aboriginal readers should be aware that this report may contain names of people and quotes from people who have since passed away.





# About CLLMM Research Centre

## *Background*

The Goyder Institute for Water Research Coorong, Lower Lakes and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) Research Centre was announced by Federal Minister for the Environment and Water, the Honourable Tanya Plibersek, in October 2022 following the advocacy of Rebekah Sharkie MP, Deputy Premier Susan Close and local community members. The Centre entered its establishment phase as of 1 July 2023. The CLLMM Research Centre is being delivered by the Goyder Institute for Water Research through its partnership with the South Australian Government through the Department for Environment and Water, CSIRO, Flinders University, the University of Adelaide, and the University of South Australia. The Institute received \$8 million from the Australian Government over 4 years from 2022–23 to establish the CLLMM Research Centre to work with communities to investigate the impacts of climate change on the CLLMM region.


## *Objectives and outcomes*

The objective of the CLLMM Research Centre is to deliver locally driven, innovative, and impactful research that reflects community and First Nations priorities to provide an evidence base to address critical needs of the CLLMM region. The CLLMM Research Centre will also bring together our First Nations, local community and scientists to create and share knowledge, and support our well-informed and engaged community and empower our future generations to be part of the solution.

The intended objectives of the CLLMM Research Centre are to:

- Provide critical knowledge to inform the identification of future management actions such that CLLMM biota and ecosystems adapt to a changing climate, the desired environmental outcomes of the Basin Plan are achieved, and international (Ramsar) obligations are met;
- Support community well-being, including that of First Nations, through knowledge creation and provision to support management actions for the restoration of a healthy CLLMM that supports local values and the integration and incorporation of the scientific knowledge of First Nations, the community, governments and researchers into the management of the region;
- Enhance the long-term prosperity of the CLLMM region through locally based research in which community and First Nations can participate and lead in cultural and scientific activities;
- Establish the CLLMM region as a world-leader of the creation, integration and adoption of the scientific knowledge of First Nations, communities, governments and researchers for the sustainable management of wetlands; and
- Develop internationally recognised environmental water leaders in South Australia a local community engaged in science to address future challenges for the region.

By achieving the above objectives, the CLLMM Research Centre will deliver the following high-level outcomes:

- Long term prosperity of the CLLMM region through locally based research that empowers community and First Nations to participate and lead in cultural and scientific activities.
  - Establish the CLLMM region as a world leader in the creation, integration, and adoption of the scientific knowledge of First Nations, communities, governments and researchers for the sustainable management of wetlands; and
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- Influence the desired environmental outcomes of the Basin Plan and international obligations are met.


A further intended outcome is the successful implementation of the principle of inclusive participation in the operation of the CLLMM Research Centre. The CLLMM Research Centre is approaching its research portfolio creation in a collaborative bottom-up manner, where community and First Nations can have direct involvement in the development and implementation of research projects as well as engagement activities. It is intended that this approach will create a basis for community and First Nations to feel meaningfully connected and supported by the CLLMM Research Centre. Together, we will showcase the CLLMM region as a leader of locally driven knowledge creation and exchange that informs management.

### *Location*

The CLLMM Research Centre is situated in Goolwa, South Australia, in the heart of the nationally and internationally significant CLLMM region. The Goolwa office of the Research Centre will provide a base for the team and researchers, as well as a central point to host community discussions and forums, education events for all ages and provide an immersive experience through virtual and augmented reality to deepen connections with the local environment.

### *Capacity and activities*

The CLLMM Research Centre is managed by four locally based staff under the guidance of Goyder Institute for Water Research Director. The CLLMM Research Centre has access to world-leading scientists, including those from Goyder Institute partners, the South Australian Department for Environment and Water (SA DEW), Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO), Flinders University, the University of Adelaide and the University of South Australia. The CLLMM Research Centre will draw on the passion and knowledge of the community and First Nations to develop and implement its research portfolio. Additionally, the Research Centre is focused on undertaking knowledge sharing and exchange with community, First Nations and stakeholders.



## The region

The Coorong, Lower Lakes, and Murray Mouth (CLLMM) region (Figure 1) is critical for the prosperity of the local community, South Australia and Australia. The region supports cultural values that underpin the well-being of First Nations people; and recreational, aesthetic and economic values of the community, including productive commercial and recreational fisheries and other industry, including and an important tourism industry. Located at the end of the one million km<sup>2</sup> Murray-Darling Basin (MDB), the CLLMM region is of significant environmental, social, cultural and economic value. It is the only place in the Basin where the river meets the sea, where the mixing of the river, tributaries, lakes, sea, and Coorong support a productive, dynamic, culturally rich, complex and diverse ecosystem.

The region defined by the CLLMM Research Centre includes the regulated lower section of the Murray River below Murray Bridge; Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert; Goolwa Channel, the Mt Lofty tributaries (Angas River, Currency Creek, Finnis River); the Murray Mouth; the North and South lagoons of the Coorong; and the near shore marine environment. The geographic scope of the Centre's research activities will also include, where appropriate, the local wetlands areas within the surrounding landscape.



**FIGURE 1.** THE COORONG, LOWER LAKES, AND MURRAY MOUTH (CLLMM) REGION.

# First Nations Engagement

## Who is this plan for?

The CLLMM region is culturally significant to the Ngarrindjeri and First Nations of the South-East communities. It has been their home for thousands of years and will continue to be their home in the face of future climate change. The First Nations knowledge of the region will be critical for the CLLMM Research Centre to understand the implications of future climate change in the region as they have oral histories and Creation stories which connect them to place, time and their ancestors. The CLLMM region is described in detail throughout these histories and provides an insight into how the various environments of the region were created and interact with each other, and how to live sustainably within them.

The Ngarrindjeri nation is an Aboriginal nation consisting currently of 3 main dialect groups; the Ramindjeri; Yaraldi and Tanganekald. These dialect groups are further divided into 18 Laklinyerar (clans), then further into individual family groups who occupy the lands and waters of the CLLMM region, and held their own Nga:tjar (totems). The Ngarrindjeri nation extends up the River Murray from Lake Alexandrina and Lake Albert, down the length of the Coorong and through the coastal area to Encounter Bay

The Boandik, or First Nations of the South-East are an Aboriginal nation divided into five main tribes; the Booandik; Mootatunga/Meintangk; Putarawutj; Witchintunga and the Ngarkat. Each tribe inhabited their own territory, ranging from north of Lacepede Bay at Salt Creek, South Australia, across to Bordertown on the Victorian border, and then south to the coast where the mouth of the Glenelg River in far-western Victoria formed the south-eastern corner. Each tribe spoke different dialects of the Bunganditj language (language of the Boandik), and all share a common matrilineal culture/society.

The CLLMM Research Centre aims to support First Nations community well-being, providing an opportunity for knowledge creation and sharing, and the incorporation of the scientific knowledge of First Nations with that of the community, governments, and researchers into the management of the region. The CLLMM Research Centre will achieve this through locally based knowledge sharing and research in which community and First Nations can participate and lead in cultural and scientific activities, which build upon existing cultural knowledge and empowers communities to take charge of the management of their land and waters. The Research Centre will create an opportunity to help build First Nations capacity involvement in Centre activities, including co-designing and leading on research, knowledge sharing, and participation in education activities.

**The targeted First Nations audiences of the CLLMM Research Centre include, but are not limited to:**

ORGANISATION/GROUP	ROLE WITHIN THE REGION
<b>Ngarrindjeri Aboriginal Corporation (NAC)</b>	As the native title corporate body (RNTBC), NAC holds the responsibility to represent Ngarrindjeri common law holders in the

	interest of cultural heritage and native title rights & interests within their land.
<b>Burrandies Aboriginal Corporation (BAC/Burrandies)</b>	As the designated corporation to represent the First Nations of the South-East, Burrandies holds the responsibility to represent First Nations of the South-East community members in the interest of cultural heritage and cultural rights & interests within their land.
<b>South-East Aboriginal Focus Group (SEAFG)</b>	Partnered with Burrandies to manage cultural business using the Lartara-wirkeri cultural governance framework.
<b>Ngarrindjeri Common Law Holders and community</b>	Native title common law holders of the Ngarrindjeri Nation and broader community.
<b>Broader First Nations Organisations</b>	General First Nations organisations, committees, councils etc. not specified within this document.
<b>First Nations of the South-East Community Members</b>	First Nations of the South-East community external to any specified First Nations organisations or groups.
<b>First Nations officers in management agencies (DCCEEW, MDBA, DEW, Landscape Boards, councils etc.)</b>	Other First Nations Engagement Officers within the region which engage with First Nations community in a similar capacity.

### *Principles that guide the way we communicate and engage.*

Importantly, we believe that good communication and engagement will have the following:

<b>Inclusion</b>	Working with the First Nations communities to participate in scientific and engagement activities
<b>Collaboration</b>	Bringing First Nations, community, government agencies and researchers together to generate and disseminate knowledge
<b>Capacity</b>	Building knowledge across the community to grow the capacity and capability of the First Nations community to mitigate and/or eliminate future climate change impacts
<b>Sharing</b>	Culturally appropriate knowledge sharing between partners, first nations communities and government agencies



<b>Free, Prior, and Informed consent (FPIC)</b>	Engaging early and often with First Nations community and organisations to provide time for informed consent to be given by them. FPIC principles are outlined further below*
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**\*FPIC principles are based upon the following criteria for engagement and consent:**

- **Free consent** - implies that consent is given by the First Nations organisation/community in the absence of intimidation, manipulation, or external pressure.
- **Prior consent** - implies that consent should always be sought in advance of undertaking any projects within the lands/waters of the First Nations people of the local area on which the projects occur. Prior consent includes providing sufficient time for the First Nations people to undertake the appropriate cultural processes and protocols involved with consultation, whilst respecting the delayed time requirements of such cultural processes.
- **Informed consent** – implies that the consent is given in the presence of all relevant information to the project(s) being undertaken on their lands/waters, including but not limited to; where it is being undertaken; what is being undertaken; how long it is being undertaken for and what potential impacts/risks it poses on the lands/waters etc.

When engaging with First Nations community and organisations, some other basic engagement principles will be followed to ensure it is culturally responsible and appropriate. These principles include but are not limited to:

- Approaching First Nations organisations, clan groups and community members in appropriate contexts. For example, engaging the correct RNTBC of a local area for general cultural heritage and native title rights & interests.
- Engaging broader First Nations community members and organisations in various capacities to provide opportunity for varied opinions and inputs from a larger audience.
- Avoiding contribution to engagement fatigue through communication with other government agencies. This is to ensure that there is no unnecessary overlap of engagements with First Nations organisations and community for projects requiring similar engagement tactics, outcomes, and outputs.
- Engaging as early and often as possible to ensure the timelines of cultural protocols and processes can sufficiently be considered when planning research projects.

Participants of CLLMM Research Centre engagement activities, including researchers, will be guided by practices defined by AIATSIS principles, found [here](#).




## Key Messages

- First Nations are the custodians of the land, sea, and water of the region (from Sea Plan).
- The CLLMM Research Centre values First Nations knowledge and culture within the CLLMM Region
- The CLLMM Research Centre acknowledges that First Nations knowledge and culture provides ancient untold histories and perspectives of the CLLMM region that should be preserved amidst climate change.
- The CLLMM Research Centre believes that First Nations knowledge can provide new and necessary perspectives into managing and maintaining the CLLMM region against climate change.

## Engagement Objectives

The CLLMM Research Centre and the 'First Nations Engagement Plan' aims to achieve the below objectives as part of their First Nations Engagement. The list includes, but is not limited to:

- The CLLMM Research Centre aims incorporate First Nations knowledge, culture, and people of the CLLMM Region into the research projects delivered by it. First Nations people and culture contains a unique connection to the land and waters of their local environment. It is important to recognise and utilise the knowledge of the First Nations people and culture to promote a healthier CLLMM region.
  - Empowering First Nations communities within the CLLMM region to lead the generation and sharing of knowledge from the research projects within their own Sea-Country (e.g. Ngarrindjeri Yarlumar-Ruwe). The CLLMM Research Centre aims to build the capacity of First Nations people to continue to care for the region beyond its operational term and help to inform future decision-making processes made by/impacting on First Nations people of the CLLMM.
  - Supporting the culturally appropriate use of First Nations knowledge and culture within the scope of the CLLMM Research Centre and its research projects. This includes supporting the withholding of culturally sensitive information to the broader public if requested by the First Nations communities, along with providing culturally safe mediums to openly share culturally sensitive information.
  - Providing broader awareness of the cultural values and history of the region to all audiences across the Murray-Darling Basin. This includes the appropriate sharing of First Nations cultural knowledge to broader audiences in an educational context and to represent a positive model of First Nations engagement practices.
  - Build on and improve existing collaborations and connections between First Nations community/organisations and research organisations aiming to engage First Nations people and culture. This includes value adding to current/ongoing engagements outside of the CLLMM Research Centre, and reducing unnecessary engagement fatigue through effective collaboration with other research organisations, institutions, partners etc.
  - Build positive relationships between governmental departments and local First Nations community & organisations.
- 



## How we communicate and engage


The CLLMM Research Centre will communicate and engage utilising the model and principles of:

### **Inform>consult>involve>collaborate>empower.**

<b>Inform</b>	Informing the First Nations communities and organisations as early as possible ensures sufficient time and opportunity to undertake cultural protocols and practices necessary for appropriate engagement and involvement within the research projects
<b>Consult</b>	Consulting early and often allows for equitable and ample opportunity for all First Nations parties involved/affected to provide input into the consultation process, whilst respecting cultural timeframes required for culturally appropriate engagement and involvement.
<b>Involve</b>	Involving First Nations community and organisations into every step of the research projects (e.g., planning, monitoring, analysis etc.), not only the consultation process. This promotes ownership of the knowledge generation and activities occurring on their lands and waters
<b>Collaborate</b>	Collaboration between First Nations parties and the CLLMM Research Centre promotes a more holistic knowledge generation process and ensure mutually beneficial outcomes for all parties involved.
<b>Empower</b>	Following the previous steps supports empowerment of/builds capacity for First Nations communities and organisations to continue to care for the environment beyond the term of the CLLMM Research Centre, making informed decisions with the new knowledge generated together

Various specific engagement tactics will be used to communicate and engage with the targeted audiences listed in section 3.1. The specific tactics used will be guided by the individual audiences and what is most appropriate in the context given.

The tactics used to engage and communicate may include but are not limited to:

- Co-design of research and knowledge projects
  - Participation in project delivery of research projects
  - Field knowledge and training days
  - Letters to target audiences
  - Yarning Circles/Informal Conversations
  - Regional newsletters
  - Social Media posts
  - Website e-news
  - Emails
  - Public forums, community discussions and workshops
  - One on one interviews
  - School programs
  - Artwork knowledge events
  - Incorporation of First Nations language in Research Centre outputs
  - Cultural knowledge-western science workshops
- 




## Risks

- The targeted First Nations audiences may lack capacity and/or resources to effectively engage with the CLLMM Research Centre - The CLLMM Research Centre will attempt to provide resources where available and appropriate to facilitate First Nations engagement within the research projects.
- Lack of ability for First Nations community, organisation's and RNTBC's to trust a newly established Research Centre – The CLLMM Research Centre's First Nations Engagement Officer will work to establish ongoing and positive relationships with First Nations community, organisations and RNTBC's.
- Non-First Nations researchers, organisations and community may not appropriately engage with First Nations community and organisations – The CLLMM Research Centres 'First Nations Engagement Plan' aims to provide guidance on appropriately and effectively engaging with First Nations community and organisations.
- First Nations community and organisations may not provide consent, approval, or endorsement of the CLLMM Research Centres research projects – The CLLMM Research Centre will endeavour to ensure that First Nations culture, knowledge and engagement are included and incorporated appropriately within the research projects.
- Some First Nations knowledge may be culturally sensitive and unable to be included within the research projects and/or outputs. The CLLMM Research Centre will provide culturally safe mediums for information and knowledge to be shared and will respect and protect culturally sensitive information from being shared inappropriately outside of its disclosure.

## Successful First Nations Engagement

Successful engagement will have been achieved if the First Nations community:

- are well informed of the changes necessary to mitigate and adapt the region to preserve the cultural values and sites within the CLLMM Region
  - have the capacity necessary to plan the changes to mitigate climate change impacts on the CLLMM Region
  - First Nations cultural knowledge and values have been ingrained into the CLLMM Research Centre's research projects and outputs.
  - broader Community members are aware of the First Nations cultural values and history of the CLLMM Region
  - First Nations community and organisations have engaged with the activities of the CLLMM Research Centre.
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# CLLMM

RESEARCH CENTRE



The Goyder Institute for Water Research is a research alliance between the South Australian Government through the Department for Environment and Water, CSIRO, Flinders University, the University of Adelaide, and the University of South Australia.