



# Community Stewardship

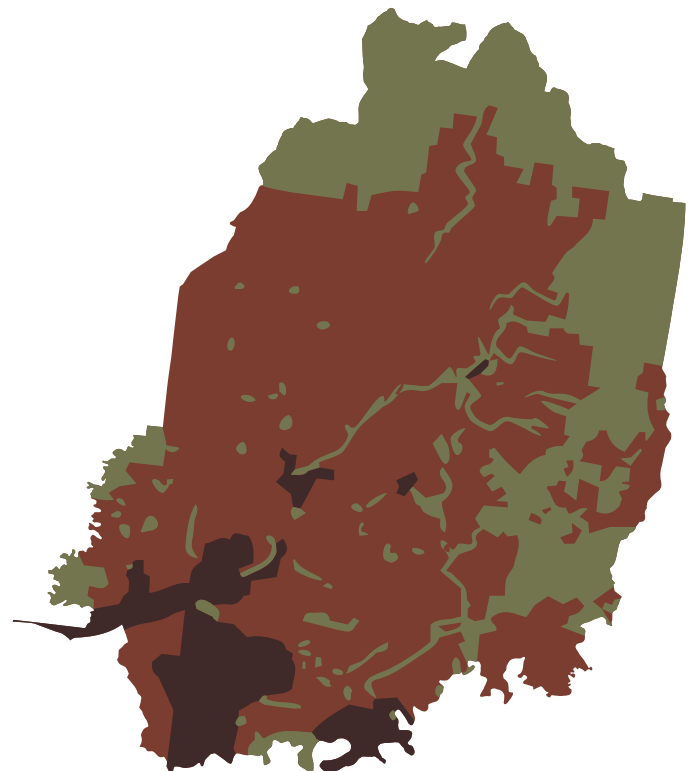
A culture of land stewardship occurs when land holders and their communities, understand themselves to be custodians of their land, the nature it supports and the waterways that pass through it. It is measured by the extent to which they take responsibility for caring for their land, their commitment to passing it on to future generations in better condition than when they came to it, and their willingness to support others in their community to do the same.

The Wurundjeri people, as Traditional Owners of the land in Nillumbik, have a long history of living on and nurturing it, having sustained a culture of community stewardship stretching back thousands of years.

## Why a culture of community stewardship of land is important

People who have a culture of land stewardship seek to understand and take responsibility for the land, its soils, waterways, native plants and animals. They recognise that, while they may hold title to the land or have responsibility for managing it, they are in fact temporary stewards and have the responsibility to protect the land and its values to pass on to future generations. Nature and agriculture can thrive in these communities.

A culture of community stewardship of land is important because it enhances community wellbeing, builds social cooperation and engagement, and ensures that land will pass to the next generation in a healthy, productive condition, and continue to support communities, agriculture, nature, and recreation.



Urban areas /townships Private land Public land



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## What a healthy culture of community stewardship of land looks like

In pursuit of their personal or organisational aspirations for their land, private land holders and public land managers understand and maintain the natural processes that make soil, water, plants and animals healthy. They proudly see themselves as stewards. They feel a deep connection to the land and the place it is part of, and are well-connected to each other socially, sharing knowledge, working together, and supporting others. They form strong, inclusive communities with a shared sense of purpose that sustains the culture of land stewardship.

They acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of the land and seek to learn new perspectives from tens of thousands of years of Aboriginal knowledge. They support the Traditional Owners to realise Aboriginal aspirations for Country and culture.

## The threats to a Culture of community stewardship of land

### Land managers with a limited connection to, or sense of stewardship of land and nature

Land managers may find it hard to make a connection with the land and nature, or feel a commitment to land stewardship, if the opportunities to access information and support are infrequent, unwelcoming, and don't fit easily into their lives. If information is not locally relevant or is communicated in a way that conflicts with their aspirations, they may not feel land stewardship is relevant to them.

### Communities with limited capacity to develop a culture of stewardship of land

Communities may find it hard to develop and support a culture of community stewardship of land when they lack the opportunity to connect with others. They may also feel poorly equipped to foster and maintain community knowledge, strength and cohesion.

### Limited connection to community

Land managers may find it hard to build local connections when the opportunities to meet and socialise with neighbours are infrequent, unwelcoming, or don't fit easily into their lives due to work, family and other commitments. They may also find it hard to connect with others if they feel their aspirations for their land are not understood or respected.

## What we can do to strengthen it and keep it healthy

### Create opportunities for people to learn about land and nature and develop their sense of stewardship

- Provide diverse, welcoming, accessible and regular opportunities for land owners and managers to access information. Bring people together to learn about soil, water, flora and fauna, how these function, what makes them healthy, and how healthy land can improve human wellbeing.

### Create opportunities for people to understand each other's aspirations

- Design community engagement activities, including with Traditional Owners, to bring people together, to find common interests, and to build understanding and respect for each other's aspirations, differences and constraints.

### Develop and strengthen the skills, knowledge and leadership capacity of people in the community

- Provide opportunities for people to develop skills in leadership, group facilitation and community development in order to strengthen existing land management groups and support the development of new groups where needed.

### Create opportunities for people to meet their neighbours

- Provide diverse, welcoming and regular opportunities for neighbouring land owners and land managers to meet, socialise and learn together through information and training days, and social events.

## The threats to a Culture of community stewardship of land

### Communities without a shared sense of purpose

Land holders may find it difficult to understand how they can be part of, and contribute to stewardship of land and nature if their community doesn't have a shared sense of purpose and direction for the place they share.

### Limited connection to Traditional Owners and culture

Land managers may not connect with Traditional Owners and their culture if opportunities to meet and learn from Wurundjeri people are infrequent, seen as intimidating or irrelevant, or don't fit easily into their lives.

## What we can do to strengthen it and keep it healthy

### Create opportunities for communities to find common goals

- Design community engagement activities that enable land owners and managers to share their aspirations for their land and community, and to find common goals they are willing to contribute to.

### Create opportunities for people to learn about Wurundjeri culture

- Provide diverse, welcoming and regular opportunities for land owners to meet and learn about Wurundjeri culture and knowledge, and to explore ways they can support Wurundjeri people to reconnect to Country and traditional practices.