

South East Forestry Hub &
Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council

Implementing Cultural Land Management in South East NSW

Final Report



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Indufor acknowledges the Bega LALC community, and that its landholdings are on the lands and waters of the Djiringanj and Ngarigo People in South East New South Wales (NSW). We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians and Elders past, present and emerging of the Djiringanj and Ngarigo People, and pay our respects to their spiritual connection to country, land, and waterways.

We extend that acknowledgement to the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community.

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In addition, NSW Local Land Services has provided funding and strong support for this project.

Indufor gratefully acknowledges this funding provided by both the Australian Government and NSW Local Land Services to support this pilot study for an Indigenous Forest Management model to be introduced by the Bega LALC in South East NSW.

Acknowledgement of project support

The South-East Forestry Hub is one of 11 Regional Forestry Hubs established by the Australian Government under the National Forestry Industries Plan 2018. They work with forest industries, state and local governments, and other key stakeholders including Local Aboriginal Land Councils to prepare and provide the Australian Government with strategic planning, technical assessments and analyses that aim to support growth in the forest industries in their region.

The South East Forestry Hub facilitated this project, and we thank Rob de Fégely as Manager of the Hub for his support in guiding the direction for this project.

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The data used and reflected in this report was collated between August 2025 and June 2026. We note the complexity of the current legal and process arrangements that apply to cultural land management practices in NSW, and therefore there will be further changes over time.

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PREFACE

This report presents a compelling, demonstrable model for Indigenous Forest Management in southern NSW, at a highly opportune time for the State government and Australian Government.

Over the past decade, Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) has worked closely with other LALCs and land management agencies in South East NSW to highlight the critical importance of Caring for Country.

Bega LALC has also worked with other LALCs and partner organisations to demonstrate its capacity to deliver culturally informed land and environmental management services across the Far South Coast and Monaro regions of NSW. Grounded in the knowledge systems of the Djiringanj and Ngarigo people, Bega Rangers combine Aboriginal cultural practices with contemporary environmental management, fire mitigation, infrastructure maintenance, and biodiversity conservation.

This report presents a model for how these services can be expanded and sustained over the long term, through long term partnerships with land management agencies, and potentially across private lands.

However, this model requires dedicated, long-term funding to support LALC capacity and operations. Long term, secure funding streams do not exist today.

This report presents a model for timely consideration by the NSW government and the Australian Government, given three major policy commitments and reform processes currently underway. These are:

- In NSW, the new Cultural Fire Strategy responding to the 2020 NSW Bushfire Inquiry
- Also in NSW, the Forestry Industry Action Plan and Independent Forestry Panel review
- At the national level, the EPBC Reforms and First Nations Engagement.

The NSW Cultural Fire Strategy

Following the devastating Black Summer bushfires, the 2020 NSW Bushfire Inquiry recommendations created a clear mandate for significantly increased focus and investment in cultural burning specifically and “Aboriginal land management” (or cultural land management) more broadly. Specifically, the final report includes the following recommendation:

Recommendation 26: “That, in order to increase the respectful, collaborative and effective use of Aboriginal land management practices in planning and preparing for bushfire, the NSW Government commit to pursuing greater application of Aboriginal land management, including cultural burning, through a program to be coordinated by Aboriginal Affairs and DPIE working in partnership with Aboriginal communities...”

In June 2026, the NSW government released its NSW Cultural Fire Strategy as a direct response to these recommendations. The Strategy affirms the State Government’s commitment to address the recommendations, and sets out a clear position statement on providing support:

“The NSW Government will support and enable Aboriginal communities to practice Cultural Fire in ways that focus on the health of Country and are safe, sustainable and interwoven with ongoing improvements in fire management. This support will include appropriate and secure investment and a measurable commitment to enhance land management practices that support Cultural Fire.”



Photo: Peter Dixon

Under the Strategy, the NSW government has committed to develop an implementation plan for the Strategy, which provides a key opportunity for the NSW government to address key current barriers and opportunities. It is timely that the Bega LALC model in this report provides a mechanism for local-level activation, which aligns directly with Pillar 1 of the Strategy.

While there are leading examples of the use of cultural burning and other cultural land management practices on the North Coast of NSW, this report also observes there has been less investment in increasing and scaling up these applications in South East NSW to date.

NSW Forest Industry Action Plan and the Independent Forestry Panel review

Concurrently, the NSW Government is developing a Forestry Industry Action Plan (FIAP) that will address, among other considerations, the sustainability of current and future forestry operations in NSW, and the environmental and cultural values of forests. An Independent Forestry Panel was appointed to lead consultation with stakeholders to further inform development of the FIAP. The State Government recently released the Panel's Stakeholder Consultation Report, which noted:

"In consideration of the importance of Aboriginal cultural values and relationships with country, stakeholders expect the FIAP to recognise existing First Nations programs, cultural burning practices and the work of the industry with Aboriginal stakeholders, and reach a position (after appropriate consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders) on whether the role of Aboriginal stakeholders in forest land management should be expanded and, if so, in what context and to what extent."

Furthermore, the Consultation Report identifies the clear need for further, deeper engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders, in relation to forest and land management in Australia.

"Submissions were under-represented from two key groups – Aboriginal stakeholders and those representing tourism and recreation industries. ... the Panel emphasises that deeper engagement must occur with this sector of the community as part of the next stage of the FIAP development process. "

In this context, it is most timely for Bega LALC to be presenting its capacity and capability to develop an Indigenous-led forest management model for the South Coast of NSW. It presents an opportunity for the Panel and the FIAP process to engage directly on this type of model.

EPBC reforms

Thirdly, the Australian Government's reform of the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (EPBC Act) is intended to create a stronger, more transparent and efficient environmental approvals system, while embedding First Nations knowledge and cultural values more directly into environmental decision-making.

One of the key reforms is the development of a new *National Environmental Standard for First Nations Engagement*, which will establish requirements for consultation and participation of Traditional Owners in environmental assessments and approvals. The reforms are also expected to strengthen the role of the Indigenous Advisory Committee and explicitly seek to embed First Nations knowledge in decision-making processes.

These reforms are directly relevant to Bega LALC's calls for increased LALC involvement in decision making processes relating to land management and the application of First Nations knowledge, such as through cultural land management in South East NSW.

In this context of the new Cultural Fire Strategy in NSW, the concurrent work of the Independent Forestry Panel on developing a Forest Industries Action Plan, and the national EPBC reforms, this report presents a compelling, demonstrable model of Indigenous Forest Management in South-East NSW that requires special consideration by all levels of government and a broad range of invested stakeholders. ❖

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of study

The South East NSW Forestry Hub, in conjunction with the Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council (Bega LALC), has commissioned this pilot study on an Indigenous Forest Management model to be introduced by Bega LALC on the South Coast of New South Wales (NSW).

The purpose of this report is to set out a model by which Bega LALC can build and establish an Aboriginal forest management model based on providing cultural land management services within the Bega Valley Shire and more broadly across the South Coast and Snowy-Monaro.

This report discusses the context for this study, the existing capabilities to develop and deliver cultural land management services and key next steps to realise the vision of Bega LALC supporting the use of Traditional Ecological Knowledge, at scale, through strong and diverse partnerships and alliances.¹

1.2 Context for study

NSW stands on the cusp of significant changes in its policies and approaches to sustainable forest management across the public native forest estate, especially in State forests that are managed for a broad range of forest values including timber production as well as recreation.

Bushfires, invasive species, climate change and the interaction between these factors present ongoing and serious challenges to forest values². Despite what is arguably an increasingly stringent regulatory environment and the ongoing expansion of the conservation reserve system, national environmental indicators of forest-dwelling and forest-dependent threatened species and the condition and extent of some forest habitats are continuing to decline.³

The Black Summer (2019/20) bushfires have had far-reaching ecological impacts and consequences, including mass regeneration creating increased future fire risks to communities as well as ecosystems. Degraded lands, which include invasive species, and the warming, volatile climate are compounding ecological stresses across the state.

These pressures have all culminated in the case for change in NSW forest policy settings and land use planning. This has led the State Government to conduct reviews of State forest management arrangements within in the state and develop a Forestry Industry Action Plan (FIAP), based on extensive stakeholder consultation.

The NSW Government has increasingly indicated that significant changes are required in the management of State forests in NSW, particularly in relation to native forest harvesting, biodiversity conservation, Aboriginal cultural heritage management, and the future role of Forestry Corporation of NSW (FCNSW).

While much public attention has focused on the proposed Great Koala National Park (GKNP), the policy direction reflects a broader shift toward increased conservation management across native forests across the state, as well as Indigenous-informed land management models and enhanced cultural heritage recognition.

The principal policy drivers for these drivers include protection of endangered koala populations and threatened species, climate change mitigation, carbon sequestration opportunities, and increasing recognition that State forests contain significant Aboriginal cultural landscapes requiring stronger protection and Traditional Owner involvement in decision-making.

¹ Bega LALC (2024) *Caring for Country Strategy 2024 – 2034*.

² Jackson et al. (2017) *Australia State of the Environment 2016: Overview*. Independent report to the Australian Government Minister for the Environment and Energy. Canberra (Australia).

³ Jackson et al. (2021) *Reshaping forest management in Australia to provide nature-based solutions to global challenges*, *Australian Forestry*, DOI: 10.1080/00049158.2021.1894383

NSW Government information on the GKNP specifically state that the park area is a “significant cultural landscape”⁴ for the Gumbaynggirr and Dunghutti peoples and that Aboriginal Advisory Panels are helping shape future management arrangements.

The Government has also committed to joint management approaches, Aboriginal employment pathways, Aboriginal ranger positions, and support for traditional cultural practices and cultural burning. This emerging policy approach aligns with broader trends in NSW public land management, where Indigenous-led and co-managed conservation models are increasingly being considered for forests with high cultural heritage values.

On the South Coast of NSW, these issues are particularly significant given the strong cultural connections of Aboriginal communities to coastal forests and forested Crown lands. South Coast native forests contain extensive cultural heritage sites, traditional resource areas, pathways and cultural landscapes associated with the lands of the Djiringanj and Ngarigo People. In this context, there has been increasing policy attention toward integrating cultural burning, Aboriginal ranger programs, and Traditional Owner participation into forest and fire management practices.

The NSW Government has also increasingly linked forest management reform to economic transition objectives. The Government has promoted alternative land-use outcomes including carbon projects, biodiversity conservation, tourism, cultural heritage management, and Indigenous employment. Government statements increasingly emphasise conservation management, fire management, carbon abatement and Aboriginal cultural heritage outcomes, alongside reduced native forest harvesting activity.

The State Government recently released the Independent Forestry Panel’s Stakeholder Consultation Report⁵, which is intended to inform the development of a Forestry Industry Action Plan (FIAP) for NSW. Of direct relevance to this study, the Consultation Report notes:

‘In consideration of the importance of Aboriginal cultural values and relationships with country, stakeholders expect the FIAP to recognise existing First Nations programs, cultural burning practices and the work of the industry with Aboriginal stakeholders, and reach a position (after appropriate consultation with Aboriginal stakeholders) on whether the role of Aboriginal stakeholders in forest land management should be expanded and, if so, in what context and to what extent.’

Furthermore, the Consultation Report identifies the clear need for further, deeper engagement with Aboriginal stakeholders, in relation to forest and land management in Australia.

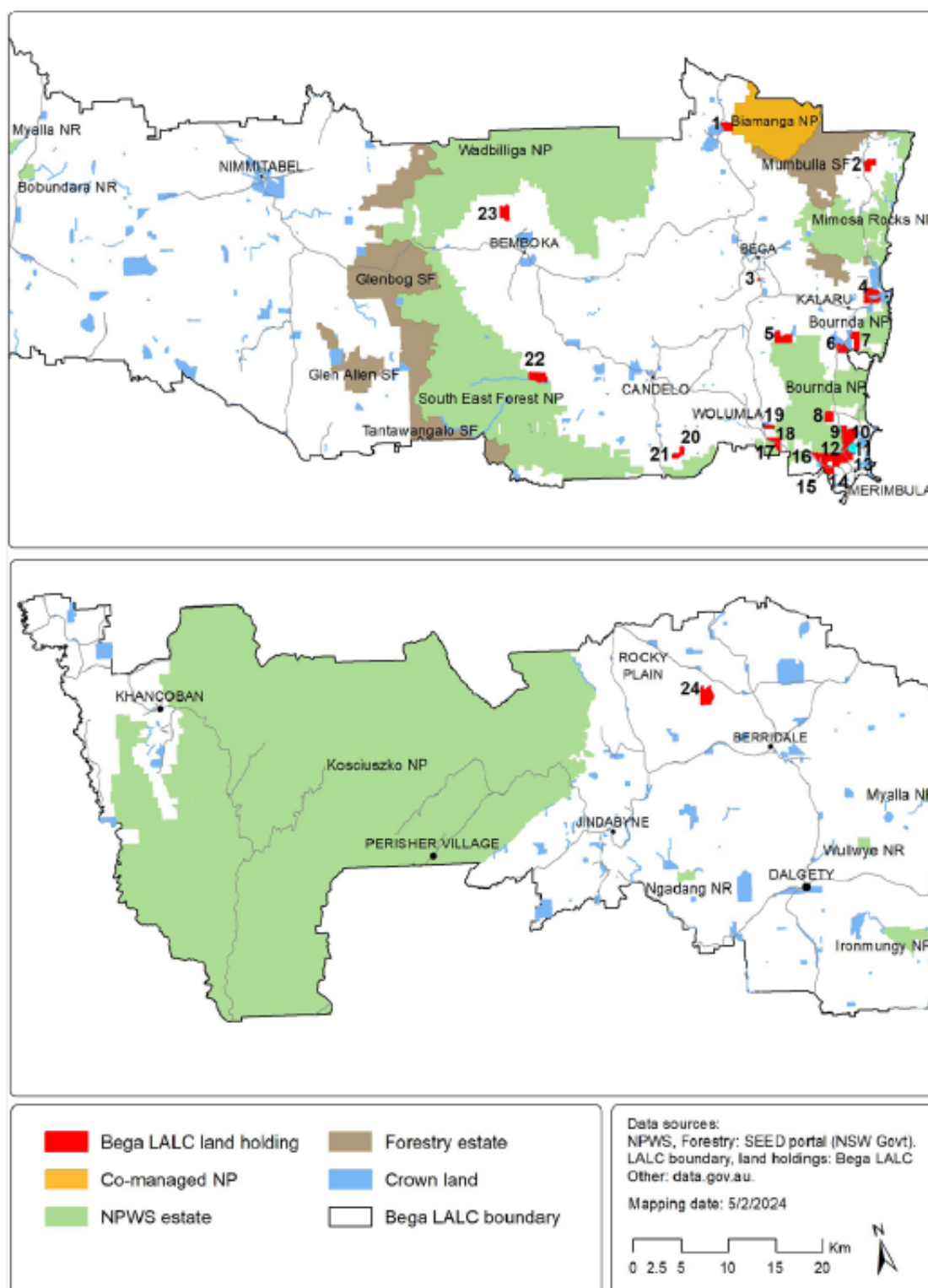
“Submissions were under-represented from two key groups – Aboriginal stakeholders and those representing tourism and recreation industries. The Panel invited a number of Aboriginal stakeholder groups to either meet with the Panel and/or provide a submission but most of these invitations were not responded to in the limited timeframe of the Panel’s work. Aboriginal stakeholders, through some individuals and one organisation, provided viewpoints to the Panel, however, the Panel emphasises that deeper engagement must occur with this sector of the community as part of the next stage of the FIAP development process. “

In this context, it is most timely for Bega LALC to be submitting its capacity and capability to develop an Indigenous-led forest management model for South East NSW. A map of the Bega LALC area, which extends from the Far South Coast up to the Snowy Monaro, is shown in Figure 1-1.

⁴ NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (2026) *Great Koala National Park update*. Online (accessed 14 May 2026); <https://www.nsw.gov.au/ministerial-releases/great-koala-national-park-update>

⁵ Independent Forestry Panel (2024) *Stakeholder Consultation Report*. Report prepared for the NSW Government, December 2024.

Figure 1-1: Map of land tenures in the Bega LALC area



Source: Bega LALC Caring for Country Strategy 2024-2034

Note: Numbers on the maps correspond to specific property plans that Bega LALC has prepared to date.

2. CULTURAL LAND MANAGEMENT IN NSW

"We see a future where we are managing our Country using our Traditional Ecological Knowledge, our culture and identity are respected and strengthened, our Traditional Owners are leading the way, and our community is empowered and benefiting socially and economically from collaborative, integrated land and sea management across our entire traditional estate ...

All underpinned by full consultation, sound planning, professional ranger teams, adaptive management, an engaged community, and strong and diverse partnerships and alliances."

Bega LALC Caring for Country Strategy 2024 – 2034, 'Our Vision'.

2.1 Concepts, Constraints and Opportunities

In 2025, the South-East Forestry Hub commissioned a report for the Bega LALC, setting out concepts, constraints and opportunities for cultural land management in the region.⁶ Dr Tony Bartlett provided a comprehensive discussion of Cultural Land (Forest) Management, based on extensive engagement with the Bega LALC and stakeholders from NSW government agencies and the local region. The report included definitional guidance, as outlined below:

"Cultural Land Management refers to the knowledge and practices that Aboriginal Peoples developed and used over tens of thousands of years to care for Country to sustain themselves and the land on which they lived and travelled. The benefits of Cultural Land Management extend beyond sustaining the natural environment. It also provides benefits to the whole community, enables healthier communities, together with the maintenance and fostering of Aboriginal culture, and providing opportunities for economic growth and social and cultural well-being. The implementation of Cultural Land Management is essential to heal and maintain healthy Country.

Cultural Land Management practices are a set of diverse practices that protect, preserve and promote the natural ecosystems and tangible and intangible cultural values to maintain a healthy Country. Importantly, [the] methods and outcomes are always place-specific and holistic, ensuring the proliferation and protection of all living things on Country as well as the intangible aspects of heritage and identity.

Therefore, the implementation of Cultural Land Management requires a deep understanding of the local plants, animals, soils and climate and it must be undertaken with respect for cultural values and the condition of the natural resources on each site."

The Bartlett report also specified a range of cultural land management activities, including:

- Cultural burning to heal and care for Country;
- Natural resource utilisation (e.g. hunting and harvesting of bushtucker and medicines in accordance with the knowledge of the seasonal calendar);
- Cultural management (e.g. ceremony, knowledge sharing, cultural heritage sites);
- Threat abatement (e.g. weed control, feral animal control, fire management and totem species protection);
- Restoration of culturally appropriate forest condition (e.g. physical removal of dense regrowth or over-represented species);
- Restoration of lost species (e.g. replanting culturally important plants and those that traditionally connected to country)
- Soil erosion management (e.g. sediment control and revegetation); and
- Economic endeavours (e.g. employment, income generation from healthy Country).

⁶ Bartlett A (2025) *Cultural Land Management: concepts, constraints and Opportunities*. A report for the Bega LALC.

The Bartlett report provides a foundation upon which Bega LALC can now seek to implement cultural land management on LALC lands, subject to access to financial resources, and to develop a service model under which it provides cultural land management services to a range of NSW government agencies, local government areas and private land holders.

2.2 Key drivers for cultural burning and cultural land management

The Bartlett report followed a series of Bushfire Inquiry recommendations that have created a clear mandate for significantly increased focus and investment in cultural burning specifically; and 'Aboriginal land management' (or 'cultural land management') more broadly.

These include the recommendations from 2020 NSW Bushfire Inquiry⁷, which included:

Recommendation 25: that the NSW Government adopt the principle that cultural burning is one component of a broader practice of traditional Aboriginal land management and is an important cultural practice, not simply another technique of hazard reduction burning;

Recommendation 26: that, in order to increase the respectful, collaborative and effective use of Aboriginal land management practices in planning and preparing for bushfire, the NSW Government commit to pursuing greater application of Aboriginal land management, including cultural burning, through a program to be coordinated by Aboriginal Affairs and Department of Planning, Industry and Environment working in partnership with Aboriginal communities. This should be accompanied by a program of evaluation alongside the scaled-up application of these techniques."

The NSW Inquiry recommendations elevated the collective focus on cultural burning as a part of a broader array of Indigenous Land Management approaches in the state.

In June 2026, the NSW Government released its NSW Cultural Fire Strategy as a direct response to these recommendations.⁸ The Strategy affirms the State Government's commitment to promote the application of Aboriginal land management knowledge and practices. It also sets out a clear position statement on providing support for Cultural Fire:

*"The NSW Government will support and enable Aboriginal communities to practice Cultural Fire in ways that focus on the health of Country and are safe, sustainable and interwoven with ongoing improvements in fire management. This support will include appropriate and secure investment and a measurable commitment to enhance land management practices that support Cultural Fire."*⁹

The Strategy clearly recognises that Aboriginal communities will require appropriate and secure investment to enhance land management practices that support Cultural Fire, i.e. cultural land management. The Strategy calls for "establishing and normalising trusting relationships", which respond to "the need for a long-term commitment of funding and resources".¹⁰ Furthermore, the Strategy calls on State agencies to proactively provide this support:

*"State agencies will support Aboriginal communities to undertake Cultural Fire through practical Cultural Fire activities. This includes attracting resources, committed partnerships and advocacy."*¹¹

Under the Strategy, the NSW government has committed to develop an implementation plan for the Strategy, which provides a key opportunity for the NSW government to address key current barriers and opportunities. It is timely that the Bega LALC model in this report provides a mechanism for local-level activation (Pillar 1 of the strategy).

⁷ *Final report of the 2020 Bushfire Inquiry*. Online: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/noindex/2023-06/Final-Report-of-the-NSW-Bushfire-Inquiry.pdf>

⁸ NSW Government (2026) *NSW Cultural Fire Strategy*. Prepared and released by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. Online: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/fire/nsw-cultural-fire-strategy>

⁹ NSW Government (2026, p15).

¹⁰ NSW Government (2026, p20).

¹¹ NSW Government (2026, p26).

At the national level, the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements in 2020 observed the growing recognition of the value of Indigenous land and fire management practices as a way to mitigate the effects of bushfires and improve disaster resilience. The Royal Commission recommendations called on governments to continue to engage further with Traditional Owners to explore the relationship between Indigenous land management and disaster resilience and *'explore further opportunities to leverage Indigenous land and fire management insights, in the development, planning and execution of public land management activities'*.¹²

The Bartlett report encompassed extensive consultation on the NSW South Coast and identified the apparent needs and opportunities for implementing cultural land management across extensive tracts of public native forest lands managed by the following agencies:

- *Crown Lands* – The NSW Crown Lands agency established a Cultural Burn Program following the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires. The program facilitates and supports the Aboriginal community, including Traditional Owners and LALCs, to undertake cultural fire management practices on Crown land. Crown Lands can contract LALC crews to undertake required Bushfire Risk Management Plan works on Crown Land blocks.
- *Local Land Services* - LLS has advised Bega LALC that there are continuing opportunities for the LALC to undertake contracts to implement cultural burning on Travelling Stock Reserves, as well as the potential to establish a Total Forest Management Service for LALC lands covered by Forest Management Plans.
- *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service* – NPWS manages extensive areas of public forest within the LALC region and has a long-standing Cultural Fire Management Policy as well as comprehensive *Guidelines for Low Risk Cultural Burning on NPWS Managed Lands*.
- *Forestry Corporation of NSW* – FCNSW has an Aboriginal Partnerships Team that engages with local Aboriginal communities to restore traditional fire management practices to public native forests. In 2023, it commenced a *Fire, Country and People* three-year program, funded under the Australian Government's Disaster Ready Fund, that will expand the use of traditional fire management in northern NSW. Aboriginal communities are involved in the co-design this program, identifying local Aboriginal aspirations and requirements for natural disaster readiness, response and recovery. This project provides a model for cultural land management that is discussed further in section 4.

In addition, the Bega Valley Shire manages significant parcels of forested land, including blocks of Council owned land and other blocks of Crown land many of which are adjacent to LALC blocks. The Shire's Conservation Unit supports cultural burning, and the Bartlett report observed it is interested in exploring a program of cultural burning on Council land and a cross tenure integrated approach to cultural land management in areas surrounding the Tathra township.

There are also substantial opportunities with agencies that are not land managers but are responsible for works that need to occur on public and private lands. These include Transport NSW, which has an Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes Project and Network Resilience Program, as well as Rural Fire Service and Fire & Rescue NSW.

2.3 Bega LALC service capabilities

Bega LALC has been collaborating with all these various NSW agencies and programs in an effort to enhance the implementation of cultural land management within the region.¹³

Collaborations with Crown Lands, LLS, Transport NSW and the RFS/Fire and Rescue have already produced some cultural land management outcomes and there are a range of potential additional opportunities with these and other agencies and stakeholders.

¹² *Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report*, 28 October 2020.

¹³ Bartlett (2025) op cit.

Recent and relevant examples include working with the Fire & Rescue NSW and the RFS to carry out low-intensity cool burns on 1.2 hectares of the Tura Beach Flora Reserve in August 2023; and Transport NSW has been collaborating with Bega LALC to implement some cultural burning under its Aboriginal Cultural Landscapes Project and Network Resilience Program, which aims to reduce bushfire risks and keep key regional roads open during future bushfire emergencies.

More broadly, Bega LALC has established capabilities to deliver culturally informed land and environmental management services across the Far South Coast and Monaro regions of NSW. Grounded in the knowledge systems of the Djiringanj and Ngarigo people, its Rangers combine Aboriginal cultural practices with contemporary environmental management, fire mitigation, infrastructure maintenance, and biodiversity conservation.

Bega LALC has a Capability Statement for these services, as set out in **Annex 1**.

These capabilities encompass a broad range of cultural land management services, extending well beyond cultural burning. These include:

- *Fire management services* - including cultural burning, hazard reduction, and fire fighting
- *Environmental and land management services* - includes ecological monitoring and surveys
- *Waterways and riparian restoration* - includes riverbank stabilisation and erosion control
- *Infrastructure and property services* - includes property and grounds maintenance
- *Cultural Heritage and cultural values* - includes inspections, monitoring and protection.

Bega LALC currently employs six Indigenous Rangers, with grant funding support from the National Indigenous Rangers Program and concurrent project funding. In addition, it has a Senior Coordinator who is a Kamilaroi fire practitioner with Advanced Firefighter / Crew Leader accreditation, who can lead cultural land management services within the region.

This capacity provides scope for a considerable expansion of cultural land management within and across the region – subject to the “*meaningful, long-term partnerships based on mutual respect and evidence of commitment*”, as called for in the NSW Cultural Fire Strategy¹⁴.

It is important to highlight the Bega LALC service capacity extends well beyond Cultural Fire – and the benefits of cultural land management extend well beyond reducing bushfire risk and increasing resilience to bushfire events.

As noted above, Bega LALC services include waterways and riparian restoration, and it seeks to undertake further work on cultural land management practices that contribute to flood and drought risk mitigation and resilience. This type of work is critically important for Bega LALC at the local and regional levels, in terms of its Caring for Country Strategy¹⁵, and looking after Country, and aligns directly with national level objectives to reduce the impact of future disasters and increase the resilience of all Australians¹⁶.

¹⁴ NSW Government (2026, p20).

¹⁵ Bega LALC Caring for Country Strategy 2024-2034

¹⁶ NEMA (2026) *Our work*. Online: <https://www.nema.gov.au/our-work>

3. KEY CHALLENGES FOR LALCS

“There appears to be great opportunity for restoration and revitalisation of cultural practices in south-eastern Australia and improvements in landscape health, along with benefits in managing bush fire risk.

But wider implementation of traditional land management practices will require review of policies and procedures, and potentially regulatory change, clear acknowledgement of the cultural basis for the practices and Aboriginal ownership of knowledge, and a commitment from Government to invest in building knowledge and capacity for Aboriginal communities to have a greater role in land management, including planning and preparation for bush fire.

This should be accompanied by a long-term commitment to monitoring and evaluation and Aboriginal-led research to quantify and communicate better the outcomes of these activities...”

2020 NSW Bushfire Inquiry (Owens & O’Kane, 2020, p. 186).

Both the 2020 NSW Bushfire Inquiry and the subsequent NSW Cultural Fire Strategy highlighted the great opportunity for restoration and revitalisation of cultural practices in south-eastern Australia and improvements in landscape health. However, they also highlighted that the implementation of traditional land management practices will require a review of policies and procedures and potentially significant regulatory change as well as investments in building knowledge and capacity for Aboriginal communities to have a greater role in land management.

The Bartlett report clearly documented the many constraints that currently limit the application of cultural land management on public and private lands in NSW and highlighted those that are particularly pertinent in the Bega LALC region. Bartlett noted many of the constraints relate to the application of cultural burning; however, some of these constraints, such as the availability of financial resources and the complex regulatory requirements, also apply to the thinning of dense forest stands to restore a culturally appropriate forest condition.

Drawing on a review of contemporary Indigenous cultural fire management literature in southeast Australia, the Bartlett report grouped the key constraints to wider implementation of cultural land management on the NSW South Coast into 13 categories. This summary of the key constraints by category are presented in Table 3-1.

These challenges are evident in and reinforced by a broader suite of policy research. Recent literature on cultural burning in NSW identifies a consistent set of institutional, legal and financial barriers constraining Aboriginal-led fire management¹⁷. A review by the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research in 2021 concluded the NSW Government does not adequately support Aboriginal groups to deliver cultural land management program and argues the current governance systems have historically marginalised Aboriginal land management practices, with regulatory frameworks designed primarily for conventional hazard reduction burning rather than culturally specific fire practices.¹⁸

In broad alignment, a University of Melbourne-led submission to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements in 2020 reported that the wide implementation of cultural burning in Australia faces knowledge, societal, political and logistical barriers. It set out the need to invest in Indigenous Land Management, caring for country and cultural burning practices, and called for governments across Australia to work in partnership with Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge holders to care for Country, to build resilience.¹⁹

¹⁷ McCormack et al (2023) *Identifying and overcoming legal barriers to cultural burning*. North East NSW Forestry Hub.

¹⁸ Williamson B (2021) *Cultural Burning in New South Wales: Challenges and Opportunities for Policy Makers and Aboriginal Peoples*. Working Paper No. 139/2021, Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, ANU.

¹⁹ Indigenous Knowledge Institute (2020) *Submission to the Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements*.

Table 3-1: Summary of constraints on LALCs and cultural land management

Constraints	Examples
Resources	- LALCs do not have adequate ongoing funding to train and maintain teams of skilled staff capable of implementing CLM. - LALCs need to operate as volunteers on some public land and excluded from bushfire risk reduction grants.
Policy issues	- There is still no State Government-wide approach to cultural burning. - Cultural burning is not recognized as a reason for lighting fire.
Legal issues	- There are multiple regulatory barriers and complex and differing processes to get approvals. - Streamlined approvals do not apply to cultural fire, and cultural burn plans are not approved for multiple years. - If LALCs are paid to do cultural burns on private land then they need approvals under <i>Local Land Services Act 2013</i>.
Capacity	- Maintaining sustainable skilled work teams, vehicles and equipment. - LALC fire crew not regarded as a RFS brigade or Parks/Forests fire crew.
Training requirements	Formal certificate level training is required, and trained people need to be appropriately paid. Higher training required for some roles on public land.
Insurance	- It is costly to obtain insurance (~\$50,000+ in 2026/27); all burns to be listed in advance, and there are constraints within 1km of assets (need RFS cover). - Note this is not covered by Government insurance on some public land.
Navigating government departments and processes	- It is difficult to find the right people to talk to at the right time across so many government agencies that have an interest in cultural and management. - Lack of trust in some situations.
Access to land and cross-tenure differences	Access to public land for cultural land management is difficult and there are different approval processes constraining cross tenure operations.
Recognition of CLM	Lack of awareness and understanding of importance of cultural management practitioners and impacts to community.
Ecological/ cultural understanding	- Minimum return intervals between burns set under current rules can conflict with Indigenous knowledge supporting more frequent, low-intensity, patch-style fires. - The requirement for a Review of Environmental Factors (REF) for some sites is very costly (\$20-50,000 in 2025/26), and is not funded in grants.
Altered landscapes	- Bushfires and past management of many forests have altered forest structure, making it difficult to undertake cool cultural burns without tree/ shrub removal. - Very high fuel loads increase the risks during cultural burning.
Application of cultural management practices	- Recognising the importance of incorporating cultural aspects into the implementation of cultural burning, there is the need to enable Elders to pass on traditional knowledge on reading Country and how and when to burn. - The Private Native Forest Code of Practice may restrict the level of forest stand thinning which can be legally achieved on private lands.
Body of evidence and Aboriginal representation	- There is limited published information on practice and impacts of CLM. - Traditional knowledge is not well represented in fire management strategies and plans.

Source: Derived from Bartlett (2025). Note the cost of insurance has increased further over past 12 months, indicatively now in the order of \$50-60,000 per year for Bega LALC to provide CLM services.

4. IMPLEMENTING CULTURAL LAND MANAGEMENT IN THE REGION

“The increasing impacts of climate change including catastrophic fires, loss of life, property, and biodiversity, along with increased greenhouse gas emissions, has governments and policy makers looking for new and fresh approaches and adaptive practice – and Aboriginal peoples’ fire management is now on the table for discussion.

The independent inquiry into the experience of NSW in the 2019–20 summer bushfires has opened what has previously been a bolted door for Aboriginal people in NSW by strongly suggesting that Aboriginal people, their knowledge and practices are vital participants in future fire management.

It is a time of immense opportunity for Aboriginal people and non-Indigenous land managers who want to walk together, learn and create new land management regimes that respond to the increased threats posed by climate change and mismanagement of lands and waters. But these intercultural experiments pose risks that must be understood and mitigated.”

Williamson B (2021) *Cultural Burning in New South Wales: Challenges and Opportunities for Policy Makers and Aboriginal People*. Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Australian National University.

The compelling need for a new model of forest management on the NSW South Coast is clearly reflected in the NSW Cultural Fire Strategy as well as the interest shown by State government agencies and other landholders looking for more active and adaptive land management post the Black Summer bushfires. A new model is also required to make greater use of LALC capacity to provide these services.

The development of a new model for the South Coast can draw directly upon and extend the emergent model on the North Coast, which has garnered attention for its groundbreaking developments in relation to implementing cultural burning especially.

4.1 North Coast: Fire, Country, People

The “*Fire, Country, People*: Aboriginal Disaster Ready Partnership” is a three-year collaborative initiative led by FCNSW in partnership with LALCs, Aboriginal corporations and communities across the Mid-North and North Coast of NSW. The project was established to integrate Aboriginal cultural burning knowledge with contemporary bushfire and disaster-management practices following the severe impacts of the 2019–20 Black Summer bushfires on Aboriginal communities.²⁰

The project is funded through the Australian Government’s Disaster Ready Fund (DRF), which is administered by the National Emergency Management Agency. Total project funding is approximately \$3 million, comprising approximately \$1.48 million from the Commonwealth DRF and approximately \$1.48 million in co-contributions from Forestry Corporation and project delivery partners, including participating Aboriginal organisations and LALCs.²¹

The initiative has involved several Aboriginal organisations and LALCs across the NSW Mid-North and North Coast regions. These partners include the Bunyah LALC on Biripi Country near Port Macquarie, the Yaegl Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation around Grafton and the Clarence Valley, and the Ngullingah Jugun Aboriginal Corporation in the Western Bundjalung region (in north eastern NSW, around Kyogle, Tenterfield and Glen Innes).

Operational trial sites and cultural burning activities have been undertaken in several State forests. These include cultural burning and firefighter training activities near Jubullum Village in the Western Bundjalung area, and more recent burns in Cowarra State Forest at Guulabaa –

²⁰ Forestry Corporation of NSW (2026) *Aboriginal community disaster ready partnership*. Online: <https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/operations/fire-management/aboriginal-community-disaster-ready-partnership-project>

²¹ NEMA (2026) Disaster Ready Fund. Online: <https://www.nema.gov.au/our-work/key-programs/disaster-ready-fund>

the 'Place of Koala', led by Bunyah LALC and Forestry Corporation staff.²² The project has combined accredited firefighter training, cultural burning demonstrations and collaborative land management planning. As at early 2026, more than 60 Aboriginal participants across the North Coast have reportedly completed accredited fire-training programs, supporting the development of long-term Aboriginal ranger capability and community-led bushfire resilience initiatives.²³

Key achievements of this program to date include the establishment of cultural burning trial sites, accredited firefighting training for Aboriginal community members, development of co-designed fire management frameworks, and research partnerships examining the ecological and social benefits of cultural burning. Forestry Corporation has also reported the program has strengthened Aboriginal employment, ranger capability and community resilience to bushfire risk across northern NSW.²⁴

4.2 What is needed on the South Coast?

On the South Coast, LALCs such as Bega LALC have much of the same capability to conduct this type of cultural burning program. This capability includes Indigenous Rangers with substantial training in fire management services, to align with the standards required by the FCNSW to conduct selected fire management services on State forests lands.

Furthermore, Bega has grant funding to support the Rangers program over the next two years, plus current projects, including several engagements with State government agencies that are supporting Bega LALC to conduct specific projects over the next 12 months.

However, these arrangements are not secured by recurrent funding initiatives or long-term service contracts. To be sustainable, Bega LALC, like all LALCs, needs to be economically sustainable and capable of contributing to enhanced livelihoods for local Aboriginal people.

To take the next steps towards a more sustainable model for implementing cultural land management, Bega needs to secure ongoing or long-term project funding. This will most likely need to be derived from strong, enduring working partnerships with local councils, land management agencies and landowners.

As noted above, the NSW Government has committed to providing this type of support through the Cultural Fire Strategy:

*"State agencies will support Aboriginal communities to undertake Cultural Fire through practical Cultural Fire activities. This includes attracting resources, committed partnerships and advocacy."*²⁵

Recognising the challenges that are constraining cultural land management in the region, especially cultural burning operations, Bega LALC needs active support from land management agencies, landowners and organisations involved in the management of forested lands on the South Coast, including fire management, infrastructure and access through these landscapes.

Specifically, this support from agencies and other stakeholders could entail the following:

- **Committing to actively working together to identify and pursue funding strategies and pathways.** This may include government grant funding program but should not be limited to grants. Other opportunities include agency programs or council programs to conduct land management works at scale or strategic protection works around townships and communities, with services that Bega LALC can provide through an ongoing role or longer-term contracts that dovetail with existing or integrated delivery arrangements.

²² Forestry Corporation of NSW (2026) op cit.

²³ National Indigenous Times (2026) *Cultural burns begin for health of Country, future generations and bushfire resilience on Biripi Country*. Online: <https://nit.com.au/21-04-2026/23831/cultural-burns-begin-for-health-of-country-future-generations-and-bushfire-resilience-on-biripi-country>

²⁴ Forestry Corporation of NSW (2026) op cit.

²⁵ NSW Government (2026, p26 & p34).

- *Jointly establishing a pilot demonstration site (or sites) for implementation of a full suite of cultural land management.* This could be mutually beneficial for agencies and stakeholders and Bega LALC, in demonstrating to all parties – and the broader public – the range of cultural land management services that can be provided, the knowledge sharing benefits, and the outcomes on the site.

Bega LALC would require funding support to develop this demonstration site, or sites, on LALC lands or Crown lands, which should be readily accessible and visible to stakeholders (e.g. along a main road and near local communities).

The investment cost of a demonstration site would likely be modest in the context of the total agency spend on land management across the region, but the benefits in terms of demonstration, knowledge exchange and ongoing learnings over time would be substantial.

- *Providing on-going training opportunities for LALC Rangers and personnel, for aligned interests in forest and fire management.* This would assist LALC Rangers and personnel to ensure they are maintaining and sharpening their skills and accreditation; and support the alignment of these accredited skills with those agencies would require for works that may be required under a broader framework of land management in the region, e.g. Asset Protection Zone (APZ) treatments, Hazard reduction preparation and site management, and firefighting capability.

Through joint training programs, there would ideally be opportunities for knowledge sharing, specifically in relation to cultural land management practices, and reciprocity between the agencies and the LALCs.

- *Engaging LALC representatives in agency planning processes for forest and fire management.* All the public land management agencies on the South Coast of NSW prepare and review multi-year plans for forest and fire management, with spatial analysis and mapping of works on a rolling schedule. For example, Forestry Corporation's Hardwood Forests Division has a Fuel Management Plan²⁶ supporting the development of a three-year prescribed burn schedule for its Forest Protection Areas (FPAs), while NPWS prepares fire management strategies for each park or reserve²⁷, in accordance with its plan of management and its statewide Fire Management Manual. LALC representatives could be invited into longer term planning for operational schedules in relevant areas.
- *Leveraging opportunities to reduce key costs of conducting cultural land management, especially cultural burning.* Insurance costs for LALCs to conduct some specific works have increased significantly in recent years and become a substantial constraint. Relevant projects on the Mid-North Coast of NSW have addressed this constraint in part by establishing arrangements whereby State government agencies can effectively cover the cost of insurance for cultural burning works by LALCs on the agency's land, through specific arrangements with *icare*.

These arrangements would not remove the need for LALCs to have insurance for works on LALC lands or services on private lands. However, it may assist to significantly reduce total costs of insurance by reducing the total cover required and encourage insurers to better respond to Aboriginal cultural burning practices²⁸.

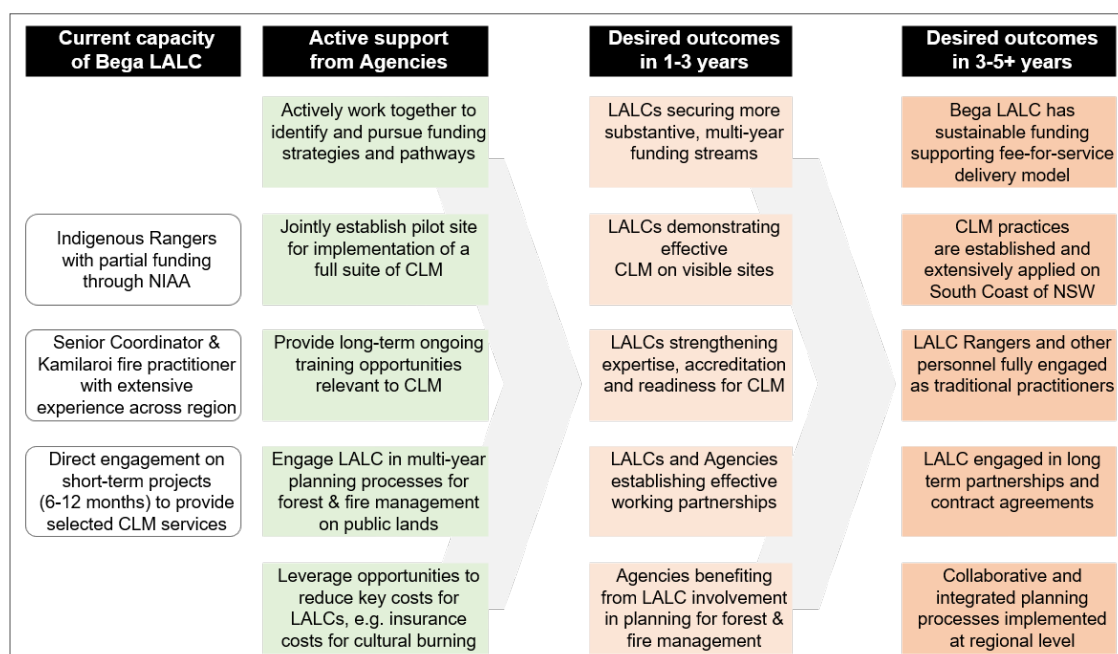
A summary of these types of initiatives is set out below in an illustration of the pathway forward, with mutual benefits for Bega LALC and State land management agencies, fire management agencies, landowners and other organisations (Figure 4-1).

²⁶ Forestry Corporation of NSW (2020) *Hardwood Forests Division Fuel Management Plan*. Online: https://www.forestrycorporation.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1241638/HFD-Fuel-Management-Plan.PDF

²⁷ NSW Government Environment and Heritage (2026) *Fire management strategies*. Online: <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/fire/fire-management-strategies>

²⁸ Insurance Business (2026) *Insurers reassess cover for Aboriginal cultural burning in Australia*. Online: <https://www.insurancebusinessmag.com/au/news/catastrophe/insurers-reassess-cover-for-aboriginal-cultural-burning-in-australia-562594.aspx>

Figure 4-1: Pathway for development of cultural land management on NSW South Coast



4.3 Establishing partnerships

This emerging model is based fundamentally on developing effective working partnerships between the LALCs and local councils, land management agencies, landowners and organisations involved in the management of forested lands on the South Coast, including fire management, infrastructure and access through these landscapes.

Bega LALC has the capabilities to provide cultural land management services, but it will require concerted support to sustain and expand the application of these services, for mutual benefits.

On this basis, Bega LALC has developed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)** to engage and invite prospective partners into a non-legally binding but formalised agreement, to actively engage and collaborate on incorporating cultural land management into land management on the South Coast and Snowy-Monaro. This MOU is attached at **Annex 2**.

Bega LALC is already engaging with most of the prospective partners on a regular basis, either directly or through regular roundtable forums, notably the RFS-led Bush Fire Management Committee (BFMC) for the Far South Coast and Snowy-Monaro. In addition, this project has led to constructive engagement with FCNSW in respect to opportunities including incorporating Bega LALC Rangers into its summer fire crews as well as its seasonal works programs.

Building on these established relationships, **the MOU is designed to engage prospective partners directly in a more active dialogue and collaboration with Bega LALC**, and an agreement to work together towards shared, mutually beneficial goals. With this intent, the proposed use of an MOU-style agreement is directly aligned with *Pillar 3: Partnerships* under the NSW Cultural Fire Strategy, which focusses on government and non-government partners, *supporting Aboriginal communities to lead Cultural Fire and grow the sector*.

There is scope for the MOU on cultural land management to recognise two types of partners:

- **Land management partners:** an MOU with land management agencies and potentially private landholders, which is focussed largely on land management plans and functions, including knowledge sharing, regional planning, capability development and service delivery
- **Strategic partners:** an MOU with other organisations that may be more focussed on policy and advocacy, strategy development and capacity building.

Through the MOU, Bega LALC and its partners would agree to develop a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) for the MOU, which are specifically relevant to the respective partner or partners. It is then proposed the Bega LALC would meet regularly (e.g. quarterly) with that partner to review progress on these KPIs. Suggested examples of KPIs are set out in **Annex 3**.

These KPIs are critical to the effectiveness of the MOU with prospective partners. Without a clear focus on tangible outcomes, genuine commitments to realising those outcomes, and regular reviews, an MOU is unlikely to be effective. However, through the setting of clear, tangible KPIs, with progression over a realistic timeframe, the MOU can support an active plan with a schedule of initiatives that are reviewed on a regular basis, leading to tangible outcomes.

4.4 Addressing key challenges

In proposing this MOU approach, it is important to review and check the extent to which it will contribute to addressing and resolving the substantial challenges to implementing cultural land management, as set out in the Bartlett report and other reports. A summary of this review and checking process is set out below in Table 4-1. This checking process is based on a review of the extent to which an MOU – if agreed to with prospective partners - would address the key constraints described in the Bartlett report.

This review indicates that **most of the constraints identified in the Bartlett report** (10 of a total of 13) **could be directly addressed by the MOU if agreed to at least in-principle and implemented by one or more of the prospective partners with meaningful KPIs.**

It is proposed the MOU will clearly set out Bega LALC intent and aspirations in relation to addressing these constraints, for in principle agreement and implementation with partners.

The remaining three key constraints would not be addressed by the MOU directly. These remaining key constraints comprise:

1. **Legal issues:** The Bartlett report and other published reviews provide guidance to changes required in State legislation to provide a more supportive regulatory settings for cultural burning programs and practices including:
 - a. establishing the right to light a fire for cultural reasons, including cultural burning operations (which may require legislative changes under multiple Acts);
 - b. creating specific processes for assessing and approving cultural burns (under the *Rural Fires Act 1997*); and
 - c. specifying that cultural burning is not akin to clearing native vegetation (which is a current constraint under the *Local Land Services Act 2013*).
2. **Ecological / cultural understandings:** Redressing the *NSW Guidelines for Ecologically Sustainable Fire Management*, to consider and appropriately reflect cultural fire knowledge on biocultural indicators which may signal when and how regular, low severity, patchy fire is better suited to certain ecosystems. This would likely lead to revisions to the Return Fire Interval thresholds within the guidelines.
3. **Policy issues:** Amending the Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice to encourage and enable cultural thinning operations where appropriate but revising the current requirements for maintaining conventional basal area limits in regenerated forests and woodlands – as these requirements may be inconsistent with context-specific custodian objectives and the desired long-term structure in culturally managed forests and woodlands.²⁹

These three outstanding matters are largely beyond the capacity for Bega LALC to address as they are matters relating to State legislation and regulations including Codes. However, Bega LALC can contribute to multi-stakeholder engagement processes on these specific issues and, where invited to do so, work with partner agencies and organisations to submit perspectives and calls for change, with a broader base of input and representation on these issues.

²⁹ Bartlett (2025) op cit.

Table 4-1: Addressing constraints cultural land management through MOU approach

Constraints		Extent to which an MOU could address key constraints
Resources	✓	MOU is intended to address longer term funding through actively working with partners to identify and pursue funding strategies and pathways
Policy issues		Not directly: the policy issues would need to be addressed later by the LALC, and separately, through a government-wide approach to CLM and appropriate recognition of policy changes to increase CLM implementation
Legal issues		Not directly: the legal issues would need to be addressed later, by the LALC, and separately, through a government-wide approach to regulatory reforms for consistency across the state and tenures
Capacity	✓	MOU should support further skills development – through joint training, demonstration sites, ongoing works, and funding for vehicles and equipment
Training requirements	✓	MOU should support further skills development and maintaining those skills over time for cultural land management and other Agency requirements
Insurance	✓	MOU should assist to reduce insurance costs, directly via more formal arrangements for public agencies to cover insurance, and indirectly, through increasing insurer comfort that losses are or will be reduced by CLM
Navigating government departments and processes	✓	MOU implementation would establish more direct, ongoing contact with counterparty government departments and their policies and processes, and most importantly, build trust over time between the LALC and departments.
Access to land and cross-tenure differences	✓	MOU implementation would contribute further to trust and working arrangements under which prospective partners could provide access to land and opportunities for cross-tenure operations.
Recognition of CLM	✓	MOU implementation would raise awareness and understanding of the importance of CLM practitioners and impacts for communities
Ecological / cultural understanding		Not directly: would need to be addressed later, by the LALC, and separately, through a government-wide approach to regulatory reforms for consistency However, important to note that REF requirements are due to be lifted for some NSW forest types after 7 years post 2019/20 Bushfires, in mid-2027
Altered landscapes	✓	MOU should lead to joint strategies to address requirements for CLM operations in forests with altered structures and challenges of undertaking cool cultural burns without tree/shrub removal
Application of cultural management practices	✓	MOU is intended to directly increase opportunities to enable Elders to pass on traditional knowledge on reading Country and how and when to burn as well as other other cultural land management practices including cultural thinning. There are some regulatory constraints that will require statewide consultation and leadership to make changes, e.g. the Return Fire Interval under the <i>NSW Guidelines for Ecologically Sustainable Fire Management</i> , and basal area limits under the <i>Private Native Forestry Codes of Practice</i> , which may restrict the level of forest stand thinning which can be legally achieved. However, the MOU could facilitate amplifying the calls for changes needed.
Body of evidence and Aboriginal representation	✓	MOU implementation should lead to increasing body of evidence for CLM, across a range of sites, and the application of Traditional Knowledge in fire management strategies and plans.

Source: Derived from Bartlett (2025, p21-22). Note the cost of insurance has increased further over past 12 months, indicatively now in the order of \$50-60,000 per year for Bega LALC to provide CLM services.

5. FUNDING ARRANGEMENTS

“Despite our considerable success in securing projects, we have no secure, long-term funding to enable a sustainable Caring for Country Ranger program. The absence of long-term funding along with unfilled potential for collaborative management arrangements in the region will limit our ability to implement this Strategy.”

Bega LALC Caring for Country Strategy 2024 – 2034.

Bega’s *Caring for Country Strategy* notes the LALC has been successful to date in sourcing grant funding for projects, and this is illustrated in a range of cultural land management-related projects conducted over recent years, summarised in Table 5-1.

Table 5-1: Bega LALC grant funding for cultural land management, 2023/24 - 2025/26

Funding body	Projects	Grants (\$)
Disaster Risk Reduction	Upgrade fire-trails, fencing and signage, biodiversity surveys, threatened species habitat restoration	280,000
DPIF/NPWS	Fox baiting in the Bournda National Park	15,272
DPIF	Yellow-belly glider surveys	21,000
Aboriginal Affairs NSW	Erosion control - Red Hill Road	20,000
Bendigo Bank	Nestbox installations and monitoring	29,797
Local Land Services	Various small grants - cultural burning, fox baiting, nest boxes, property plans, feral cat surveys	136,904
Local Land Services	Support Bega LALC women working on country	33,112
NIAA	Junior Ranger program	400,000
NIAA	Capability building BEM LALCs	not available
Transport NSW	Highway corridor vegetation management	400,000
WWF	Cultural burning, science mapping and drone training	187,000
Total (over three years)		\$1,523,085

Source: Bega Caring for Country Strategy 2024 - 2034

However, Bega LALC is seeking now to secure long-term, ongoing funding to provide for a sustainable land and sea management program. This shift to a more secure financial footing would underpin increased cultural land management practices and provide a broader range of benefits for local landscapes, Bega LALC and the wider community.

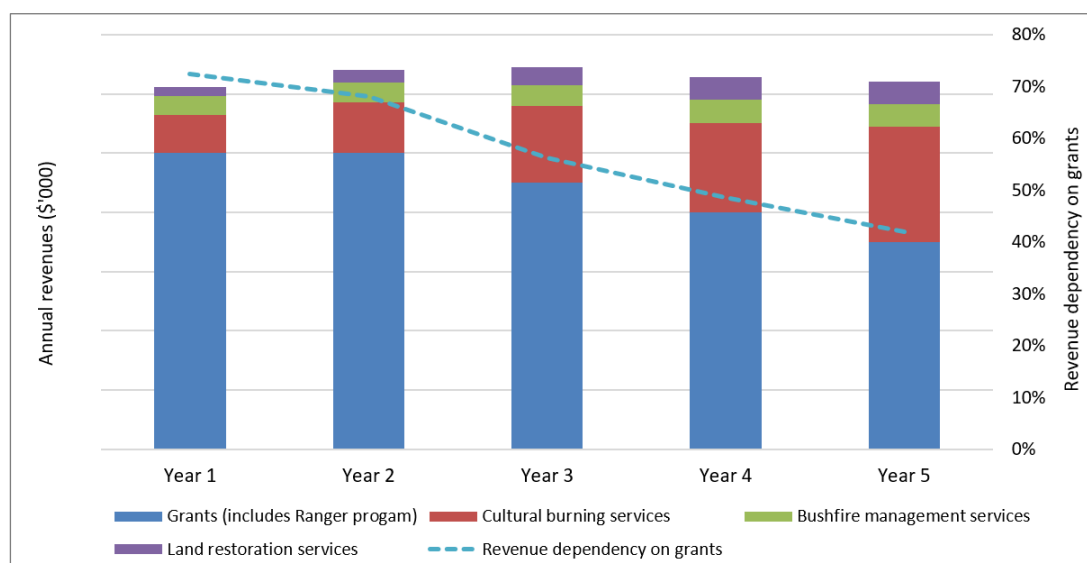
Securing long-term funding based on a fee-for-service model requires consideration of a schedule of fee rates that would support a sustainable program.

With that objective, this study encompassed the development of a financial model for Bega LALC cultural land management services. The financial model incorporates a range of inputs on the current cost base, and a range of assumptions about the scope for conducting a range of cultural land management services, under grant funding and fee-for-service arrangements over the next five years. An illustration of the type of outputs and financial guidance that can be generated from this model is set out below (Figure 5-1).

This financial model can be used to determine a cost-plus rate for cultural land management services, based on current costs and projections for the next five years. These projections incorporate a wide range of assumptions, including for example, CPI-based (flat real) increases in operating costs.

Use of this financial model indicates that cost recovery for Bega LALC providing cultural land management services would require average fee rates of between \$50-85/hour, across the project team comprising Senior Rangers (including a Senior Coordinator), Rangers and Trainees, as well as Finance/Admin support. This fee rate range excludes consideration of a specific margin for profit; but also excludes concurrent funding that may be made available to support cultural land management services, e.g. grant funding for the Indigenous Rangers or Junior Rangers program, which can partially offset some of the operational cost base.

Figure 5-1: Projections for Bega LALC revenue, over five years (2027 – 2031)



Source: Indufor modelling, based on Bega LALC guidance, assumptions and projections

This study has compared these average fee rates with those that are incorporated in the *Fire, Country, People* program operating on the Mid-North Coast and North Coast and found that the Bega LALC cost recovery fee rates are slightly higher but comparable, i.e. of a similar quantum. It should be noted this comparison of fee rates is not necessarily based on a like-for-like comparison, for a broad range of relevant factors – including but not limited to, the *Fire, Country, People* program comprising a three-year program, with extensive works across multiple LALCs, all with their own cost bases and potentially differing requirements for cost recovery and operational revenue requirements.

This comparison to the Mid-North Coast and North Coast projects provides a useful reference base for Bega LALC to establish a standard set of rates for its services on the South Coast and Snowy-Monaro. On this basis, it is proposed Bega LALC establish a standard schedule of fee rates, based on this range of service fee rates between \$50-100/hour for trained personnel, with scope to recognise a schedule of rates reflecting a hierarchy of expertise and experience.

A proposed schedule of standard fee rates for cultural land management services to be delivered through short-term projects (i.e. projects extending up to three months) for the 2026/27 financial year is set out in Table 5-2. Fee rates for longer-term projects (i.e. 4+ months) and long-term program agreements can be negotiated and derived from these standard fee rates.

Table 5-2: Bega LALC standard fee rates for CLM services, 2026/27 (excluding GST)

Bega LALC personnel	Indicative experience	Hourly fee rate (\$)
Senior Ranger / Coordinator	10+ years with specialist training	\$90
Indigenous Rangers	3+ years & required training	\$75
Trainees and Junior staff	1+ years & required training	\$50
Administration staff	Administrative experience	\$45

This schedule of standard fee rates can be incorporated into the proposed MOU with prospective partner organisations, for clarity and transparency in setting Bega LALC's expectations for service fee rates to address its objectives of cost recovery (plus a reasonable margin) and developing a sustainable model based on long-term funding. Bega LALC should reserve the right to review and revise this standard schedule of fee rates (for short term projects) in following years.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

Bega LALC has a Caring for Country Strategy (2024-2034) – and the 10-year strategy presents, *“our story about the way we see our future role in Caring for our Country”*.

Bega LALC Caring for Country Strategy 2024 – 2034, ‘Our Vision’.

This report builds upon the Bartlett report of 2025 to reiterate the clear and compelling need for a new model of Indigenous Forest Management in South East NSW, where the future for timber harvesting in public native forests is highly uncertain, and LALCs such as Bega, Merrimans and Eden have expressed a strong interest and readiness to support transformational change through cultural land management.

This report also presents a way forward for Bega LALC and other LALCs on the South Coast to provide cultural land management services, based on the emergent model on the North Coast of NSW. This emergent model is based on developing effective working partnerships between the LALCs and local Councils, land management agencies, landowners and organisations involved in the management of forested lands, including fire management as well as infrastructure and access through these landscapes.

This new model is directly aligned with NSW Government policy commitments made under the Cultural Fire Strategy and it presents an opportunity for State agencies to implement actions aligned with the Strategy with immediate effect in South East NSW.

This report introduces the scope to develop an MOU with prospective partner organisations to clearly set out Bega LALC’s intent for cultural land management and engage partners in a more substantive and formalised discussion of how opportunities can be identified and pursued.

6.1 Recommendations for Bega LALC

In this context, the following recommendations are set out for Bega LALC consideration:

1. Finalise the proposed MOU (Annex 2) for consideration by the LALC and in principle approval for engagement with key stakeholders.
2. Engage further with other key stakeholders and prospective partner organisations on the proposed MOU as a basis for establishing working partnerships with clear objectives. MOU discussions should focus principally on the Bega Valley and Snowy-Monaro Shire Councils, and land management agencies, i.e. Crown Lands, LLS, FCNSW and NPWS.
3. Engage directly with the Healthy Country Team within the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW) to share the Bega LALC model and discuss its alignment with the NSW Cultural Fire Strategy, including ways to obtain financial support and increase the respectful, collaborative and effective use of Aboriginal land management practices in South East NSW.
4. Engage directly with the NSW Government’s Independent Forestry Panel to discuss input to its Considerations Report, specifically the type of role that LALCs such as Bega can provide in planning and delivering cultural land management practices across State forests; noting the voices of Aboriginal stakeholders have been underrepresented to date.
5. Prepare a clear map of the forest areas within the Bega LALC boundaries within which Bega LALC would like to conduct cultural land management, with assigned priorities; and share this map with councils, agencies and other public and private stakeholders with overlapping, adjacent or aligned interests in the designated areas of priority interest.
6. Focus on the establishment of 1-2 demonstration sites as a matter of highest priority, through engaging with one or two leading agencies or organisations that can provide funding or support to access funding to enable the establishment of these sites.
7. Continue to maintain active and effective engagement with the Far South Coast BFMC and commence active engagement with the Snowy-Monaro BFMC, to maintain an active dialogue about cultural land management services on at least a quarterly basis.

6.2 Guidance for Partner Organisations

While Bega LALC can adopt and implement the recommendations set out above, **the effectiveness of these actions will depend largely on genuine, sustained support from its prospective partners in land management agencies, local councils, landowners and other organisations involved in managing forested lands in South East NSW.**

Bega LALC has the capabilities to provide cultural land management services, but it will require concerted support to sustain and expand the application of these services, for mutual benefits. This concerted support is needed over the next few years to enable Bega LALC to establish secure, long-term funding that can underpin a sustainable, fee-for service delivery model that sustains cultural land management on both LALC lands and non-LALC lands.

Constructive engagement with FCNSW has commenced in respect to opportunities including incorporating Bega LALC Rangers into its summer fire crews and seasonal works programs. However, further engagement of this nature is required to realise tangible outcomes.

Therefore, alongside the recommendations for Bega LALC, this report presents guidance for Partner Organisations to strengthen their existing working relationships or establish new partnership arrangements with the LALC. **This guidance is provided in the context of anticipated mutual benefits for Partner Organisations.** Mutual benefits may include:

- achieving and demonstrating alignment with government policy directions, such as meaningful implementation of the NSW Cultural Fire Strategy;
- building strong Aboriginal enterprises that manage significant areas of the forest with a focus on sustainability, profitability and strong partnerships;
- strengthening existing fire management capabilities and capacity of the organisation, including summer fire crews for fire-fighting responses, as well as capacity to conduct prescribed fire operations to achieve fuel reduction and other objectives; and
- enhancing organisational understanding of and access to Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

In this context, guidance for prospective Partner Organisations in South East NSW includes:

1. *Establish an MOU to jointly establish clear intent:* A first key step is for organisations to proactively engage with the LALC and establish an MOU with agreed KPIs that set out a clear understanding of respective objectives, areas of aligned interests, capabilities and commitments. A set of suggested examples of KPIs are set out in Annex 3.
2. *Commit to actively working together to identify and pursue funding strategies and pathways.* This may include government grant funding program but should not be limited to grants. Other opportunities include agency programs or council programs to conduct land management works at scale or strategic protection works around townships and communities, with services that Bega LALC can provide through an ongoing role or longer-term contracts that dovetail with existing or integrated delivery arrangements.
3. *Identify programmatic options to establish and build working relationships, e.g. fire crews.* Land management agencies such as FCNSW and NPWS typically have seasonal works programs and summer fire crews, that could provide opportunities to incorporate LALC teams in a structured, ongoing program, which would provide a basis for building familiarity with LALC capability and delivery requirements. Through engagement in these types of rolling works programs, other opportunities for collaborative initiatives can be considered.
4. *Establish a pilot demonstration site for cultural land management in South East NSW.* There is potentially scope for land management agencies to identify a designated area of forested land under their management responsibility that could be assigned to Bega LALC to manage, with a suitable allocation of funding resources, for implementation of a full suite of cultural land management. This could be mutually beneficial in demonstrating to the organisation and all stakeholders the range of cultural land management services that can be provided, the knowledge sharing benefits, and the outcomes on the site.

Through these types of initiatives, Partner Organisations can proactively support LALCs to realise tangible and meaningful outcomes on the ground, for a range of mutual benefits. ❖

7. REFERENCES

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Annex 1

Capability Statement for Cultural Land Management



Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council Rangers

Capability Statement

Empowering Country, Culture and Community

The Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council Ranger Team delivers culturally informed land and environmental management services across the Far South Coast and Monaro regions of New South Wales. Grounded in the knowledge systems of the Djirringanj and Ngarigo people, the Rangers combine Aboriginal cultural practices with contemporary environmental management, fire mitigation, infrastructure maintenance, and biodiversity conservation.

Fire Management Services

- Asset Protection Zone (APZ) treatments
- Strategic Fire Advantage Zone (SFAZ) treatments
- Cultural burning support and implementation
- Firefighting capability
- Hazard reduction preparation and site management
- Fuel load reduction and environmental weed management
- Drone-assisted fire planning, monitoring, and evaluation

Environmental and Land Management

- Bush regeneration and native revegetation
- Vegetation management and removal
- Track and trail maintenance
- Soil stabilisation and erosion control
- Pest and weed management
- Feral animal management and control
- Ecological monitoring and fauna surveys

Waterways and Riparian Restoration

- Riparian restoration works
- Riverbank stabilisation and erosion control
- Weed and pest management in riparian areas
- Community and school education activities
- Estuary and river-based field operations



Infrastructure and Property Services

- Fencing and gate installation
- Property and grounds maintenance
- Public visitation area maintenance
- Minor construction and repairs
- Construction of yarning circles and outdoor gathering spaces

Cultural Heritage and Cultural Values

- Cultural heritage site inspections
- Cultural mapping and landscape interpretation
- Monitoring and protection of culturally significant places
- On-Country education and cultural learning activities

Certifications, Qualifications and Training

- Certificate II Public Safety (Fire)
- Advanced Firefighter / Crew Leader
- PUAFIR201 – Assist with prescribed burning operations
- PUAFIR204 – Respond to wildfire and bushfire
- PUAFIR309 – Operate pumps
- FWPCOT2254 – Maintain and operate chainsaws
- FWPCOT2273 – Trim and cut felled trees
- FWPCOT3325 – Operate four-wheel drive vehicles
- 4WD Recovery Training
- Remote Area First Aid
- ChemCert Certificate
- 1080 Fox Baiting and Vertebrate Pesticide Induction Training
- Coxswain Grade 3
- RePL – Remote Pilot Licence (up to 25kg)



Partnerships and Collaboration

The Bega LALC Rangers work collaboratively with government agencies, local councils, environmental organisations, educational institutions, community groups, emergency services, Traditional Owners, and private landholders to deliver practical and culturally informed outcomes.

Why Work With Bega LALC Rangers

- Deep cultural knowledge and connection to Country
- Accredited operational capability
- Strong local relationships and regional knowledge
- Flexible and collaborative service delivery
- Commitment to sustainable and culturally informed outcomes

Contact Information

Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council

104 Gipps Street

Bega NSW 2550

Phone: (02) 6492 3950

Email: projects@begalalc.org.au

Website: begalalc.org.au

Annex 2

Proposed Memorandum of Understanding



Memorandum of Understanding

between Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council and Partnering Organisations supportive of the application and delivery of Cultural Land Management Services on the South Coast of NSW

August 2026



Acknowledgements:

We wish to acknowledge and pay our respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waterways and airspace of the Far South Coast and the Snowy-Monaro regions of NSW.

Contact:

Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council
104 Gipps Street
Bega
New South Wales 2550
Australia



MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between

Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council

ABN: 60 9375 789 61

Address: 104 Gipps Street, Bega NSW 2550
("Bega LALC")

and

[_____]

ABN: [Insert]

Address: [Insert]

("Partner organisation")

1. Introduction

This Memorandum of Understanding ("MOU") sets out the intentions, principles, and framework for ongoing collaboration between Bega LALC and Partner organisations in relation to the planning, development, and potential provision of Cultural Land Management ("CLM") services.

Bega LALC is an organisation with expertise in the delivery of cultural knowledge, cultural land management, community engagement, heritage advisory services, cultural awareness programs, and/or other related cultural services grounded in Traditional Owner knowledge, First Nations cultural practices, and community-led approaches.

The Partner Organisation is seeking to support Bega LALC and explore opportunities to engage cultural services to support its operations, projects, land management activities, environmental initiatives, organisational capability, regulatory obligations, stakeholder engagement, and/or broader reconciliation and sustainability objectives.

In this context, the Parties acknowledge the importance of:

- respecting and protecting cultural knowledge and intellectual property
- supporting culturally appropriate engagement and decision-making
- fostering long-term, respectful relationships
- recognising Traditional Custodians and cultural authority structures
- promoting outcomes that deliver cultural, environmental, social, and economic benefits.

2. Purpose of the MOU

The Parties are entering this MOU in good faith to establish a framework for cooperation, information sharing, and the exploration of future service opportunities.

The purpose of this MOU is to:

- clearly set out Bega LALC's interest in and capability to provide CLM services within the region
- establish a collaborative working relationship between the Parties, which may include land management functions or may also be focussed more on policy, strategy and advocacy functions
- outline the areas of potential cooperation
- provide a framework for discussions, planning, and project development
- identify principles for culturally appropriate engagement
- support the development of future project agreements or service arrangements as appropriate.



This MOU is intended to align directly with key objectives of NSW Cultural Fire Strategy¹, which calls for State agencies to support Aboriginal communities to undertake Cultural Fire through practical Cultural Fire activities. This includes attracting resources, committed partnerships and advocacy.

3. Acknowledgements

The Parties acknowledge and pay their respects to the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waterways and airspace of the Bega Valley and the Snowy-Monaro of NSW.

The Parties also recognise and understand:

1. Bega LALC has a *Caring for Country Strategy 2024 – 2034* that sees a future in which the LALC is managing Country using their Traditional Ecological Knowledge, culture and identity are respected and strengthened, Traditional Owners are leading the way, and the Aboriginal community is empowered and benefiting socially and economically from collaborative, integrated land and sea management across our entire traditional estate.²
2. Looking after Country requires CLM, which incorporates Traditional Ecological Knowledge and practices that Aboriginal Peoples have developed and used for millennia.
3. CLM includes but is not limited to the use of Culture Fire – it encompasses set of diverse, site-specific practices that protect and promote the natural ecosystems and cultural values to maintain a healthy Country.
4. CLM refers to the knowledge and practices that Aboriginal Peoples developed and used to care for Country to sustain themselves on which they lived and travelled. Its implementation requires a deep understanding of the local plants, animals, soils and climate, consider the condition of the natural resources and respect cultural values on each site.³
5. CLM methods and outcomes are always place-specific and holistic, ensuring all living things prosper. It fosters Aboriginal culture and intangible aspects of heritage and provides opportunities for economic and social growth in communities.
6. Cultural Fire is part of CLM, but Country determines when to do cultural burns, not fuel loads. More broadly, CLM involves implementing a set of diverse, site-specific practices that protect and promote the natural ecosystems and cultural values to maintain a healthy Country. These practices include:⁴
 - Cultural burning to heal and care for Country
 - Natural resource utilisation (e.g. hunting and harvesting of bushtucker and medicines in accordance with the knowledge of the seasonal calendar)
 - Cultural management (e.g. ceremony, knowledge sharing and management of cultural heritage sites)
 - Threat abatement (e.g. weed control, feral animal control, fire management, totem species protection)
 - Restoration of culturally appropriate forest condition (e.g. physical removal of dense regrowth or over-represented species)
 - Restoration of lost species (e.g. replanting culturally important plants and those connected to country)
 - Economic endeavours (e.g. employment opportunities).

¹ NSW Government (2026) *Cultural Fire Strategy*. Published June 2026. Refer Pillar 1: Activation, page 26.

² Bega LALC (2024) *Caring for Country Strategy 2024 – 2034*.

³ Bartlett A (2025) *Cultural Land Management: concepts, constraints and Opportunities*. Report prepared for the Bega LALC.

⁴ *Ibid*.



4. Scope of Potential Services

Bega LALC is dedicated to serving the local Aboriginal community by protecting cultural heritage and fostering connection to Country. The Bega LALC Ranger Team can deliver culturally informed land and environmental management services across the Far South Coast and Monaro regions of NSW. Grounded in the knowledge systems of the Djiringanj and Ngarigo people, the Bega LALC Rangers combine Aboriginal cultural practices with contemporary environmental management, fire mitigation, infrastructure maintenance, and biodiversity conservation.

With this capability, the potential services Bega LALC may provide include, but are not limited to:

- *Fire Management Services:*
including Asset Protection Zone (APZ) treatments, Strategic Fire Advantage Zone (SFAZ) treatments, cultural burning support and implementation, hazard reduction preparation and site management, fuel load reduction, drone-assisted fire planning, monitoring, and evaluation, and firefighting capability.
- *Environmental and Land Management Services:*
including bush regeneration and native revegetation, vegetation management and removal, track and trail maintenance, soil stabilisation and erosion control, pest and weed management, feral animal management and control, and ecological monitoring and fauna surveys.
- *Waterways and Riparian Restoration:*
including riparian restoration works, riverbank stabilisation and erosion control, weed and pest management in riparian areas, community and school education activities, and estuary and river-based field operations that can reduce flood risks and increase landscape resilience.
- *Infrastructure and Property Services:*
including fencing and gate installation, property and grounds maintenance, public visitation area maintenance, minor construction and construction of yarning circles and outdoor gathering.
- *Cultural heritage and cultural values:*
including heritage site inspections, cultural mapping and landscape interpretation, monitoring and protection of culturally significant places, On-Country education, and cultural learning.

The Parties also acknowledge that Bega LALC has Certifications, Qualifications and Training to support all these services to the professional and contractor standards generally expected of NSW State Government land management agencies for these services.

5. Bega LALC Responsibilities

To give effect to this MOU, Bega LALC agrees to:

1. jointly develop a set of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for this MOU, focussed on tangible actions and outcomes over a realistic timeframe for both parties
2. provide cultural advice and services within its expertise and authority
3. maintain and continue to strengthen its capabilities to plan and deliver CLM services
4. conduct proactive mapping and planning of LALC areas, and potentially non-LALC areas, with the Bega Valley and Snowy-Monaro Shires for priority attention for CLM services, to share with Partner Organisations and other regional stakeholders
5. actively monitor new funding opportunities and identify pathways for supporting CLM services that may be relevant to and could be pursued in collaboration with Partner Organisations
6. regularly engage with regional forums such as the Bush Fire Management Committees, in support of regional coordination across councils, State agencies and other stakeholders
7. engage with Partner Organisations on a regular basis to discuss plans and priorities, joint initiatives and progress on these initiatives over time.



6. Partner Organisation Responsibilities

To give effect to this MOU, the Partner Organisation agrees to:

1. jointly develop a set of KPIs for this MOU, focussed on tangible actions and outcomes over a realistic timeframe for both parties
2. engage with Bega LALC regularly (nominally, on quarterly basis) to review the KPIs under this MOU and discuss plans and priorities, joint initiatives and progress on these initiatives over time
3. actively monitor new funding opportunities and identify pathways for supporting CLM services that may be relevant to and could be pursued in collaboration with Bega LALC
4. ensure LALCs has a fair opportunity to bid for funding from or via the Partner Organisation to deliver CLM services, when those opportunities may arise
5. support LALCs to have access to relevant training programs that it may be conduct over time, especially where there may be mutual benefits in cultural awareness and knowledge exchange.

7. Governance and Communication

For this MOU, the Parties will nominate one or more key contact persons for each party, whom shall:

- a) establish meeting schedules and reporting arrangements
- b) outline consultation and decision-making processes.

8. Confidentiality

The Parties agree to maintain confidentiality regarding:

- a) culturally sensitive information
- b) commercial information
- c) project documentation
- d) any information identified as confidential by either Party.

9. Funding and Commercial Arrangements

This MOU does not create any binding financial obligations unless expressly stated.

For the purposes of clarity and guidance to the Partner Organisation, Bega LALC has established a standard fee rates table for its CLM Team Leader, Indigenous Rangers, and administrative support.

The Bega LALC standard fee rates table for CLM services to be delivered through short-term projects (i.e. projects extending up to four months) for the 2026/27 financial year is set out in Table 1. Fee rates for longer-term projects and long-term program agreements can be negotiated and derived from these standard fee rates. Bega LALC reserves the right to negotiate these fee rates, and to review and revise this schedule of standard fee rates (for short term projects) in following years.

Table 1: Bega LALC Standard Fee Rates for CLM Services (short-term), 2026/27 (excluding GST)

Bega LALC personnel	Indicative experience	Hourly fee rate (\$)
Senior Ranger / Coordinator	10+ years with specialist training	\$90
Indigenous Rangers	3+ years & required training	\$75
Trainees & Junior operations staff	1+ years & required training	\$50
Administration staff	Administrative experience	\$45



10. Non-Binding Nature

Except for clauses relating to confidentiality, intellectual property, and any expressly binding provisions, the Parties acknowledge the intent for this MOU is to record their shared objectives but does not create legally binding obligations.

Notwithstanding this non-binding nature of the arrangements, the Parties acknowledge that the existence of this MOU can be used by State agencies to demonstrate efforts to address commitments aligned with the NSW Cultural Fire Strategy and other relevant NSW Government policies and strategies calling for long-term partnerships and increased support to Aboriginal communities in relation to working towards healthier Country.

11. Term and Review

Commencement date: _____

Duration: 2 years from commencement

Review process: Review progress through regular (nominally quarterly meetings)
Review utility and benefits for the Parties on annual basis.

12. Future Agreements

The Parties acknowledge that:

- a) specific projects or services may be governed by separate service agreements, contracts, purchase orders, or funding agreements; and
- b) nothing in this MOU obliges either Party to enter into future agreements.

13. Execution

Signed for and on behalf of:

Bega Local Aboriginal Land Council

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

[Partner Organisation]

Name: _____

Title: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Annex 3

Proposed KPIs for the Memorandum of Understanding

Proposed Key Performance Indicators

August 2026

1. Introduction

As part of establishing the proposed MOU, it is proposed that Bega LALC and its partners would agree to develop a set of key performance indicators (KPIs) for the MOU, which are specifically relevant to the respective partner or partners. It is then proposed that Bega LALC and partner organisations would meet regularly (e.g. quarterly) to review progress on the agreed KPIs.

As noted in the study, these KPIs are critical to the effectiveness of the MOU with prospective partners. Without a clear focus on tangible outcomes, genuine commitments to realising those outcomes, and regular reviews, an MOU is unlikely to be effective. However, through the setting of clear, tangible KPIs, with progression over a realistic timeframe, the MOU can lead to tangible outcomes.

There is scope for the MOU on cultural land management to recognise two types of partners:

- *Land management partners*: an MOU with land management agencies and potentially private landholders, which is focussed largely on land management plans and functions, including knowledge sharing, regional planning, capability development and service delivery; and
- *Strategic partners*: an MOU with other organisations that may be more focussed on policy and advocacy, strategy development and capacity building.

To support the development of MOUs with these two distinct types of partners, proposed KPIs are set out below for consideration and modification or adoption as suitable.

2. Proposed KPIs for MOU with land management partners

Proposed KPIs for an MOU with land management partners may comprise:

1. Bega LALC has provided proactive mapping of LALC areas, and potentially non-LALC areas with the region, for priority attention for CLM services, and shared this with the Partner Organisation.
2. The parties have conducted a joint planning session to review the Bega LALC mapping of areas for priority attention for CLM services, and the Partner Organisation's mapping and planning for land management works, to identify and discuss the scope and funding resources for CLM works in the short (next 12-18 months), medium (2-5 years) and longer term (5+ years).
3. The Partner Organisation is actively monitoring and identifying new funding opportunities and pathways for supporting CLM services in South East NSW that may be relevant to and could be pursued through collaboration with the LALCs.
4. The Partner Organisation has engaged Bega LALC to deliver CLM services or ensure the LALCs have a fair opportunity to bid for funding from or via the Organisation to deliver CLM services, when and where those opportunities may arise - i.e., when it has land management works that are to be conducted by an external service provider.
5. The Partner Organisation has provided an invitation or access to relevant training programs that it may be conduct over time, especially where there may be mutual benefits in cultural awareness and knowledge exchange.
6. *(Where applicable)* The Partner Organisation has provided an invitation for Bega LALC trained personnel to join its bushfire management crews, ideally through a long-term standing arrangement that may comprise part of a seasonal program and crew rostering arrangements.
7. The Partner Organisation has invited the LALC to participate in or actively contribute to the organisation's strategic planning process for land management works in the region, and CLM more specifically (including but not limited to Cultural Fire), on a regular basis, e.g. annual or biannually.
8. Bega LALC has secured long-term funding to support its capacity for CLM works and services.

3. Proposed KPIs for MOU with strategic partners

Proposed KPIs for an MOU with strategic partners may comprise:

1. The parties are meeting regularly (e.g. 3-monthly or 6-monthly) to discuss:
 - a) current initiatives focussed on increasing the extent to which LALCs are provided with more substantive resources and opportunities to enable the delivery of CLM services in the region, on a significantly larger scale compared to activity over the past 3- 5 years (2020-2025);
 - b) policy developments that may impact, positively or negatively, on LALC capacity to provide CLM services (including but not limited Cultural Fire) across the region; and
 - c) collaborative responses to policy developments, to strengthen the resource allocations to and collective capacity of LALCs and Partner Organisations for conducting CLM works, which will *leverage Indigenous land and fire management insights, in the development, planning and execution of public land management activities*¹.
2. The Partner Organisation is actively monitoring and identifying new funding opportunities and pathways for supporting CLM services in South East NSW that may be relevant to and could be pursued through collaboration with the LALCs.
3. The parties are actively collaborating on at least one initiative that is aiming to increase the capacity of the LALC - or LALCs - to deliver CLM works and services to realise aligned objectives for land management, mitigation of the effects of bushfires, and improving disaster resilience.
4. Bega LALC has secured long-term funding to enable a sustainable *Caring for Country* Ranger program, and more broadly, support its capacity for CLM works and services on an on-going basis.

¹ Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements Report, 28 October 2020.



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