



THE  
MUNGO  
REPORT

Statement of Significance  
OF THE  
Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area  
TO  
Aboriginal People of Western New South Wales

Compiled by Western Heritage Group Inc

THE  
MUNGO  
REPORT

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Statement of Significance  
OF THE  
Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area  
TO  
Aboriginal People of Western New South Wales

statements contributed between 1985 and 1991

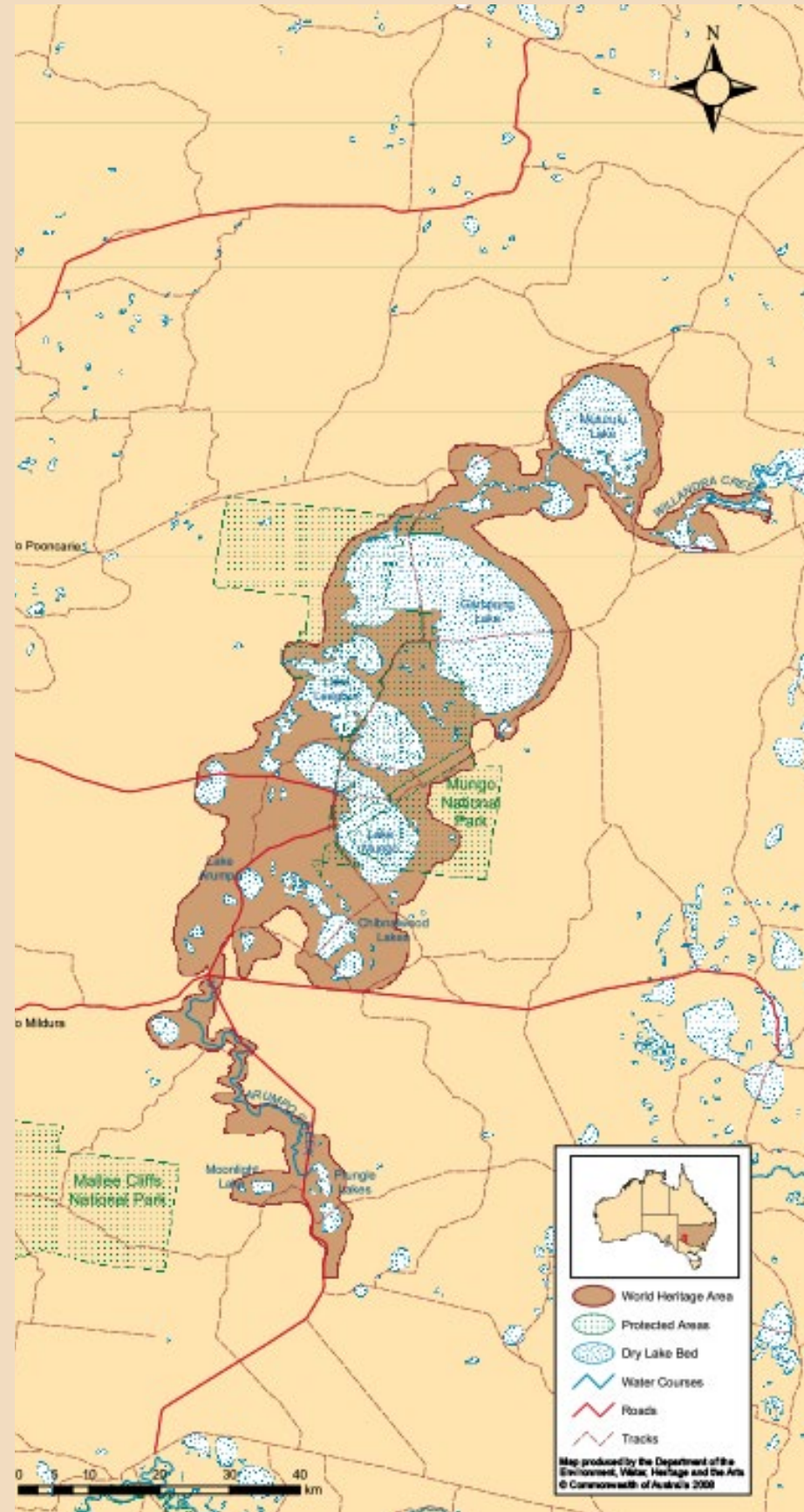
update to 2017

production and editorial content

by

Western Heritage Group

NOT SURE  
WHAT TO DO  
WITH THIS.  
DO YOU  
WANT ME TO  
RECREATE?  
THE QUALITY  
IS POOR AS IT  
IS



LOCATION MAP: WILLANDRA LAKES WORLD HERITAGE AREA AND MUNGO NATIONAL PARK



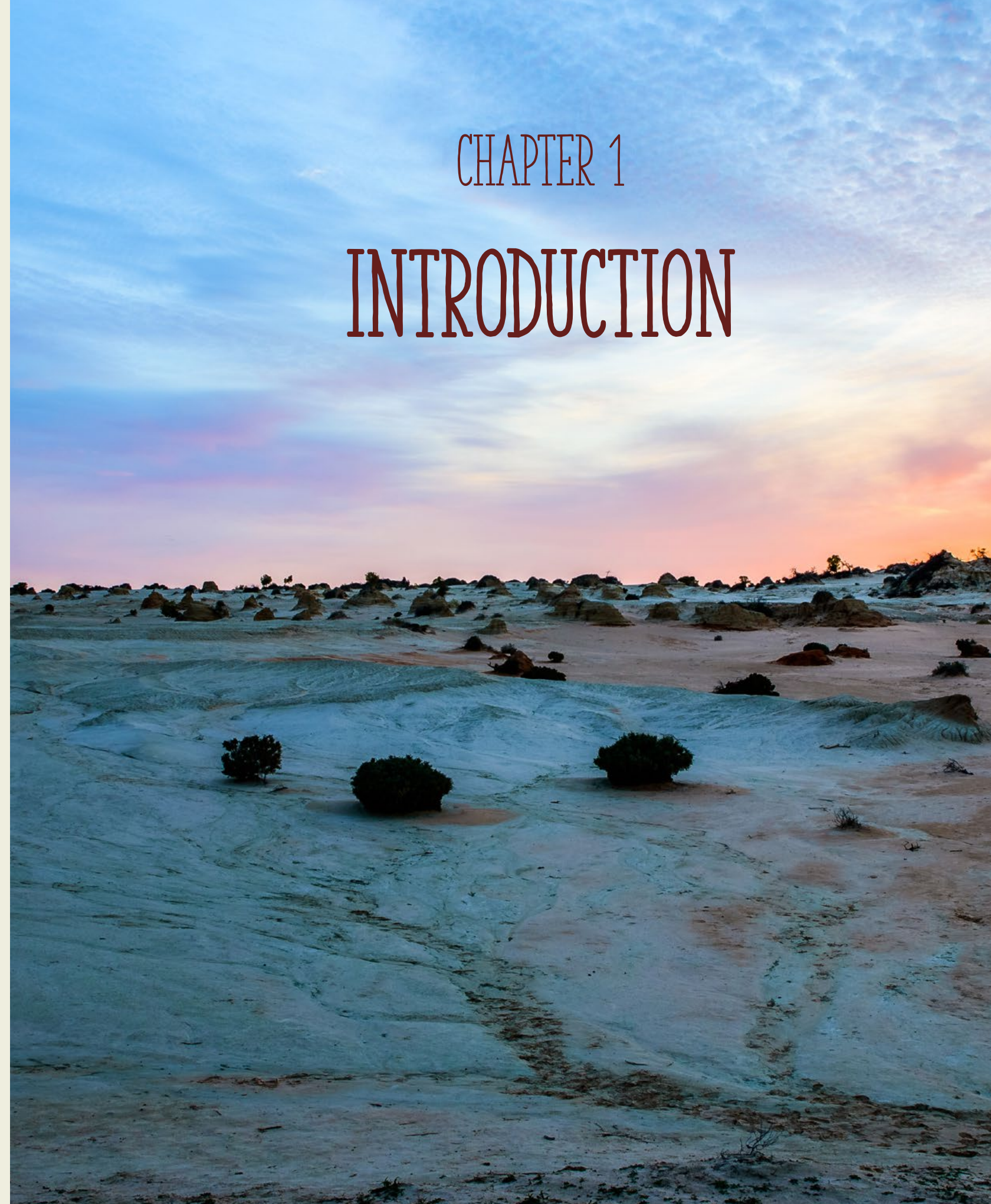
*Welcome!*

*It is good you have  
come to this heritage  
land of our ancestors.*

*Alice Kelly, Senior custodian of  
the Willandra Lakes*

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## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION

# THE LAND AND THE PEOPLE

This *Statement of Significance* encompasses a much wider area than the designated Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area. This is because the Willandra Lakes lie within the land of more than one Aboriginal group, with each group's land extending well beyond the World Heritage Area. The Willandra Lakes also has significance to Aboriginal people from a wider region.

The evidence from oral history shows the many ties that Aboriginal people have with this land through birthplace, time spent, work, family graves, ancestry, kinship, ceremony and other connections.

Most people with ties to the Willandra Lakes are now living in towns in far-western NSW and north-western Victoria, though some live further away.

## WORDS FOR 'PEOPLE' IN ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

Aboriginal people of the region have different ways of describing themselves. Many people in this *Statement of Significance* simply say 'Aboriginal people', or 'our people' or 'Blackfellas', but some contributors also use the word in a local language for 'person' or 'Aboriginal people'.

**Wiimpatja** is the word for 'person' or 'people' in the **Paakantji** language.

**Mayi** is the word for 'person' or 'people' in the **Ngiyampaa** language.

**Koori** is now the most common word in use for 'person' or 'people' in the areas to the south and east of Mungo, including the lands of the Yitha Yitha, Mathi Mathi, Wemba Wemba and Yorta Yorta peoples.

## PURPOSE OF THE MUNGO REPORT

This *Statement of Significance* aims to make clear the spiritual, ancestral, economic and historic ties that Aboriginal people have with the land now forming the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area.

The Mungo Report also presents Aboriginal views on the control and management of the natural and cultural values of this World Heritage Area.

The Report is built around people's memories, ideas, beliefs, knowledge and opinions, that were recorded between 1985 and 1991.

The release of this historic Report allows the voices from 1985 to 1991 to be heard today. These voices combine to give a unique collective memory extending back to the early 20th century. The voices come from a dynamic period of regional re-assertion of Aboriginal land and cultural interests. These historic voices are especially important in guiding discussion about the respect and care due to the skeletal remains of ancestors.

## HISTORY OF THE MUNGO REPORT

- With the listing of Willandra Lakes as a World Heritage Area in 1981, the Commonwealth and New South Wales Governments commissioned a number of reports on the natural and cultural values of the Area. This process of gathering knowledge and advice was to form the basis of management planning for the World Heritage Area.
- The Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council took on one aspect of this management planning process - the documentation of Aboriginal cultural values, associations and views on management. This was based on people's memories, ideas, beliefs, knowledge and opinions. The Regional Land Council saw this work as part of its role to assert Aboriginal rights and obligations to land and culture in western New South Wales.
- A limited amount of funding was provided by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment.
- Memories, ideas, beliefs, knowledge and opinions were recorded between 1985 and 1991.
- A draft text of this Report was produced in 1992 and presented to all Local Aboriginal Land Councils in the Western Region, as well as to the National Parks and Wildlife Service and to the Commonwealth Department of the Environment.
- The Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council lost its powers in 1992 due to hostile amendments to the Aboriginal Land Rights Act by the NSW Greiner Government. This removed the ability of the Regional Land Council to support the finalisation and distribution of *The Mungo Report*, so the 1992 draft sat on the shelf and was largely forgotten for many years.
- In 1992, the Heritage Working Group of the Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council became the Western Heritage Group Inc and continued working on projects in the region.
- In 2014, the agencies involved in management of the Willandra Lakes World Heritage Area were reminded of the 1992 draft Report and its rich content. Those agencies decided *The Mungo Report* would make a unique and vital contribution to renewed discussion about Aboriginal involvement in management of the World Heritage Area.
- Western Heritage Group was offered funding through the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage to review the 1992 draft and prepare it for publication.
- Western Heritage Group made a decision to keep *The Mungo Report* as a historic document of memories, ideas, beliefs, knowledge and opinions as they were at 1985 to 1991. A comprehensive update is beyond the scope of the present task. This historic Report has its own special value.



*The Mungo Woman is so old, she doesn't just belong to one group of people. She belongs to all Aboriginal people.*

*Mary Pappin  
Babranald 1991*

- A short update to 2017 is provided to help the reader understand the place of this historic Report in the context of all the social, political, administrative and legal changes since 1992.
- As part of preparing the update, the 2014-15 funding covered travel expenses to allow Suzanne Hall and Karin Donaldson from the Western Heritage Group to visit many of the contributors to the 1992 draft Report (or a family member if they had died). The update includes short update comments in 2014 and 2015 from some of the contributors. These comments cover whether their views on heritage management and the treatment of human remains had changed. Some comments refer to their increased cultural knowledge over the (roughly) 25 years.

# HOW THE MUNGO REPORT WAS PUT TOGETHER

**ORAL HISTORY:** Memories, ideas, beliefs, knowledge and opinions were written down by Karin Donaldson between 1985 and 1991.

At that time, most contributors to this Report lived in Balranald, Robinvale, Buronga, Dareton, Wentworth, Pooncarie, Menindee, Wilcannia, Broken Hill, Ivanhoe, Lake Cargelligo, Murrin Bridge, Griffith, and Rankins Springs. There are a few contributions from people living in other places.



Two main trips were made around the region to talk with individuals and small groups. In most cases it was possible to re-visit contributors, show them where the work was up to and add more of their words. Private funding enabled a further trip in 1990 to Ivanhoe, Griffith, Balranald, Buronga and Dareton. This allowed Karin and Gayle Kennedy to visit some contributors, discuss the proposed format and add more contributions.

The aim was to get contributions from many Aboriginal people who have a variety of connections to the Willandra Lakes region. Another aim was to include people from different age groups, different economic situations and different educational levels.



*The Mungo Woman is so old, she doesn't just belong to one group of people. She belongs to all Aboriginal people.*

*Mary Pappin  
Balranald 1991*

In keeping with Mary Pappin's statement, contributions were invited from a few Aboriginal people who have no direct ties with the Willandra Lakes but who have personal links with some contributors and could add to the broad perspective about the issues involved.

**MEETINGS:** As well as the personal contributions, there were also two large meetings at Lake Mungo in ..?? and November 1991..... , as well as the gathering to accept the return of the remains of Mungo Woman on ##th January 1992. These meetings discussed management arrangements for the World

Heritage Area and focussed particularly on the return of the remains of Mungo Woman. This Report contains some comments from people at these meetings about those particular issues. These meetings were very particularly valuable because they enabled important older people to get together. They also facilitated the beginning of a regional Aboriginal position on the issues dealt with in this Report.

**LIMITATIONS:** The extent of the 1985 to 1991 oral history work was limited. Government funding for travel costs could only support two trips. This limitation on the project meant that some people who wanted more time to think about the issues, or were waiting to see what significant people said before they made a contribution themselves, did not have a chance to participate as fully as they may have if more visits had been possible.

This limitation was partly overcome when private donations made possible a short third trip in 1990 to some towns.



*I don't want to say too much, because I'm waiting to hear what Aunty Alice Kelly says, see?*

*Arthur Lawson*



*We're used to having time, listening to the old people, what they say. We're not used to this way.*

*Kay Shepherd*

**A FORMAT FOR THE REPORT:** Many contributors expressed frustration with the way reports on Aboriginal cultural issues are usually done, with the priorities of academics or government departments usually dominating. They complained that not only is there inadequate consultation with Aboriginal people, but the reports are not presented in a way that is meaningful, interesting and easily understood.

To address this wish for culturally relevant presentation, Karin Donaldson devised several possible layouts and showed them to a number of contributors for comment. It soon became apparent that an informal, personalised, photographic layout was overwhelmingly preferred. This format is helpful in several ways. It shows equal respect for each contributor. It allowed contributors to easily find the words of others they especially respected. It humanises this *Statement of Significance* so that a reader ‘meets the contributor’ face to face. It is helpful in showing the age range of those contributing.

Once we had reached agreement about the general style of the report, Alice Kelly, Anthony Pease and Peter Thompson also made important suggestions to Karin about layout and design.

**THE 1992 DRAFT OF THE MUNGO REPORT:**

The 1992 draft Report was in an informal personalised layout as developed through discussion. The 1992 draft of *The Mungo Report* was produced and presented to Aboriginal people and Government agencies. As stated in the section on history of this Report, it sat on the shelf for many years.

**REVIEW 2014-2016:** The opportunity to review the 1992 draft and prepare it for publication came with a funding offer from NSW and Commonwealth Governments in 2014.

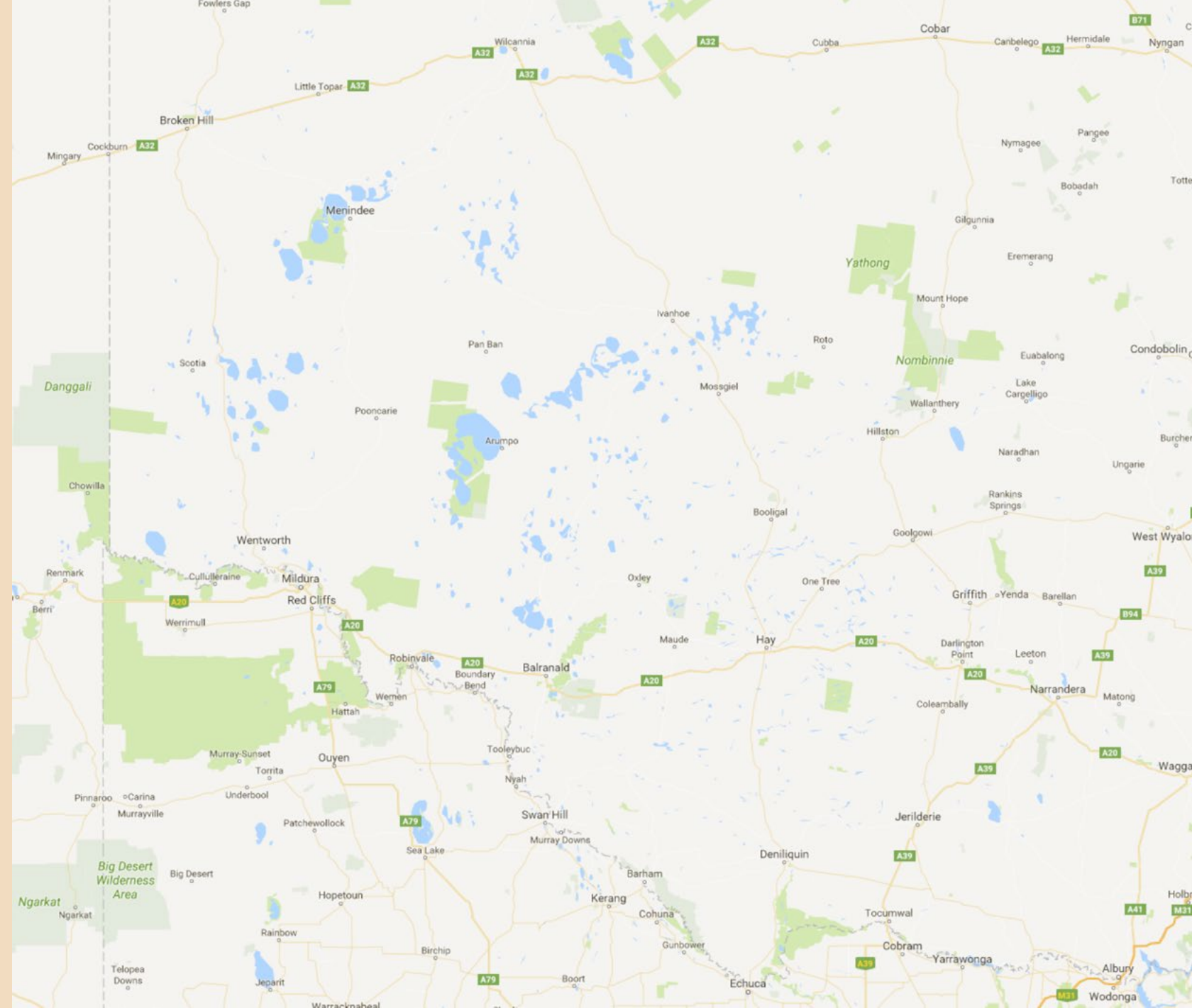
**CHECKING 2014-15:** Suzanne Hall and Karin Donaldson travelled to visit all the

contributors they could find, or family members of those who were deceased. After the long lapse in time, it was important to check that people were still happy to have their 1985 to 1991 quotes published. In all cases, contributors said that they still held the same views as at that time.

**EDITING 2014-17:** Original quotes from the contributors were kept. The sections and chapters of the 1992 draft Report were rearranged slightly. The aim is to clearly state, in the words of the contributors, the significance of Mungo, people’s cultural associations, their perspectives on archaeology and their views on management. Editorial comment was cut to a minimum. This work to prepare *The Mungo Report* for publication was done by Peter Thompson, Karin Donaldson and Suzanne Hall between 2014 and 2017. Jane Carroll reviewed various drafts.

**PHOTOGRAPHS:** Portraits were taken by Karin Donaldson between 1985 and 1991. Jamie Billing took most of the landscape photos in 2015. For the source of other photos, see acknowledgements.

**DESIGN FOR PUBLICATION:** The style of *The Mungo Report* came from discussions in the 1980s between Karin Donaldson and the contributors, with special input from Alice Kelly. The design concept for the final Report was developed by Suzanne Hall, Karin Donaldson, Peter Thompson and David Shipman in 2015. Graphic design ready for publication was done by David Shipman in 2015-17.



DO YOU WANT THIS MAP TO BE FULL PAGE?



# LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS TO *THE MUNGO REPORT*

These are the people who contributed to *The Mungo Report*. Next to their name is the place where they lived during 1985 to 1991 and the tribal identity they used at that time. [Some people later discovered more information about their ancestry and now choose to use other tribal names – see Chapter 7 – Update to 2017.]

Wayne Atkinson	Jan Ettrich	Doreen Jones	Len (Baschie) Kirby
Graham Atkinson	Fred Egan	Jack Jackson	Jenny Kirby
Clive Atkinson	Barbara Flick	Gwen Jackson	Liza Kennedy
Hilda Barlow	Pearl Ferguson	Gertie Johnson	George Kennedy
Donny Barlow	Yvonne Firebrace	Manny Johnson	Violet Kennedy
Jim Bates	Pam Greer	Christine Johnson	Roy Kennedy
Badger Bates	Bob Harris	Victor Lance Johnson	Gayle Kennedy
Willy Bates	Max Harris	Toddy Johnson	James (Buddy) Kennedy
William Bates	Susie Harris	Nancy Johnson	Barry Kerwin
Evelyn Bates	Robert Harris	Ronnie Johnson	Phillip Kerwin Gary Kirk
Darren Bates	Mick Harris	Fay Johnstone	Patrick Lawson
Michelle Bates	Pam Harris	Michelle Johnstone	Dorothy Lawson
Isobel Bennett	Margie Harris	Estelle Johnstone	Marie Lawson
Ruby Bugmy	Marlene Harris	Lorraine King	Arthur Lawson
Robert Bugmy	May Hudson	Alice Kelly	Cora Lawson
Joyce Bugmy	Dorrie Hunter	Alf Kelly	Ray Lawson
Louise Bugmy	Christine (Nhuni) Hunter	Archie King	Greg Lawson
Rhonda Cunial	Elizabeth Hunter	Kelly Koumalatsos	George Lynette
Emrose Clark	Suzanne Hall	Gordon Kirby	Bes Murray
Bella Clark	Doug Hall	Eileen Kirby	Stewart Murray
Bev Cunningham	Dennis Hall	Sharon Kirby	Nancy Murray
Lionel Dutton	Darryl Hall	Isabel Kirby	Neville Murray
Andy Dennis	Daphne Hall	Maxine Kirby	Ray Murray
Coral Dunlop	Doug Jones	Ruth Kirby	William Murray
Ethel Edwards	Elsie Jones	Micheal Kirby	
Bill Elwood			

Tessie Murray	Kay Shepherd
Jack Melrose	Josie Thorpe
Renie Mitchell	Alastair Thorpe
Colin Mitchell	Jim Whyman
Laurie Mitchell	Evelyn Whyman
John Mitchell	Phyllis Whyman
Junette Mitchell	Nola Whyman
Brenda Mitchell	Alan Whyman
Clarrie Mitchell	Mamie Whyman
Myrtle McCormack	Dennis Williams
Monica Morgan	Eileen Williams
Kevin McCartney	David Williams
Gary Nelson	Edie Williams
George O'Neill	Mervyn Williams
Maureen O'Donnell	Lottie Williams
Norma O'Hara	Joyce Williams
Mary Pappin	Wilfrid Wilson
Beryl Philp	Ashley Wilson
Carmichael	John Winch
Gayle Philp	Norma Walford
Barry Philp	
Herbie Pettit	
Darcy Pettit	
Marie Pettit	
Amy Quayle	
Johnny Quayle	
Greg Quayle	
Gerald Quayle	
Vincent Quayle	
Patsy Quayle	
Willy Riley	
Muriel (Mooki) Riley	
Joe Smith	
Bronco Sloane	
Doris Sloane	
May Smith	
Roddy Smith	
Dawn Smith	

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## FUNDS:

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Commonwealth Department of the Environment provided some funding to Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council in the 1980s for the oral history work.

Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council provided some further funding and resources between 1985 and 1992.

Peter Williams and Gayle Kennedy provided funds to cover the 1990 trip.

In 2014-16 the Commonwealth Department of the Environment and the New South Wales Office of Environment and Heritage provided funds to enable the Western Heritage Group to review the 1992 draft, visit many of the contributors and prepare The Mungo Report for publication.

## ENCOURAGEMENT:

All the contributors were enthusiastic about the oral history work. encouraged the work of documenting regional Aboriginal memories, ideas, beliefs, knowledge and opinions about Lake Mungo.

With the leadership of William Bates, the members of the Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council encouraged and strongly supported the work. Until the Regional Land Council lost its powers in 1992, they saw this work as the background for their campaign to empower Aboriginal people in relation to the management of their heritage.

William Bates, Graham Carter, Barbara Flick and Eric Wilson were strong supporters behind the scenes between 1985 and 1992.

In 2014-16 Dick Green and Geoff Simpson recognised the importance of supporting Western Heritage Group to review the 1992 draft and to prepare The Mungo Report for publication.

## OTHER PUBLICATION ASSISTANCE:

David Shipman established the web site [www.westernheritagegroup.com.au](http://www.westernheritagegroup.com.au)

## PHOTOGRAPHS AND DRAWINGS:

Jamie Billing took most of the landscape photos.

Chris Donaldson took the photos of Lake Mungo on pages ### and \$\$\$.

*Bark Canoe on the Darling River at Avoca Station 1904:* Photo held by South Australian Museum.

*Tolarno Station 1865:* Photo from Mrs A Boyd, as published in *West of the Darling* by Bobbie Hardy.

*Menindee at time of Burke and Wills Expedition:* Drawing by Ludwig Becker, held by National Library of Australia.

Other historic photos have been provided by family members and libraries.

## MAPS:

Commonwealth Department of the Environment

1884 Western Division Pastoral Holdings

Google Maps

Google Earth

# REFERENCES

*Yamakarra! Liza Kennedy and the Keewong Mob.* Compiled by Western Heritage Group. Published 2013 by Western Heritage Group Inc, Wilcannia. [Collective memoir of the Ngiyampaa people from between Cobar and Ivanhoe.]

*The Aboriginal Story of Burke and Wills.* Edited by Ian Clark and Fred Cahir. Published in 2013 by CSIRO, Collingwood. [Includes illustrations and diary notes from 1860 between Balranald and Menindee.]

*Aboriginal People at the Willandra Lakes.* 1992 summary report to NPWS by Jeanette Hope, Tamsin Donaldson and Luise Hercus. [This report has a good list of older references for further reading.]

*The Story of the Falling Star.* Told by Elsie Jones and compiled by Heritage Working Group of Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council. Published in 1989 by Aboriginal Studies Press. [When talking about Malkarra being at Lake Mungo, Elsie Jones stated in 1985: "Dick Willow was an old Paakantji Clever Man. In 1927 he told my family another story about Malkarra. That was The Story of the Falling Star."]

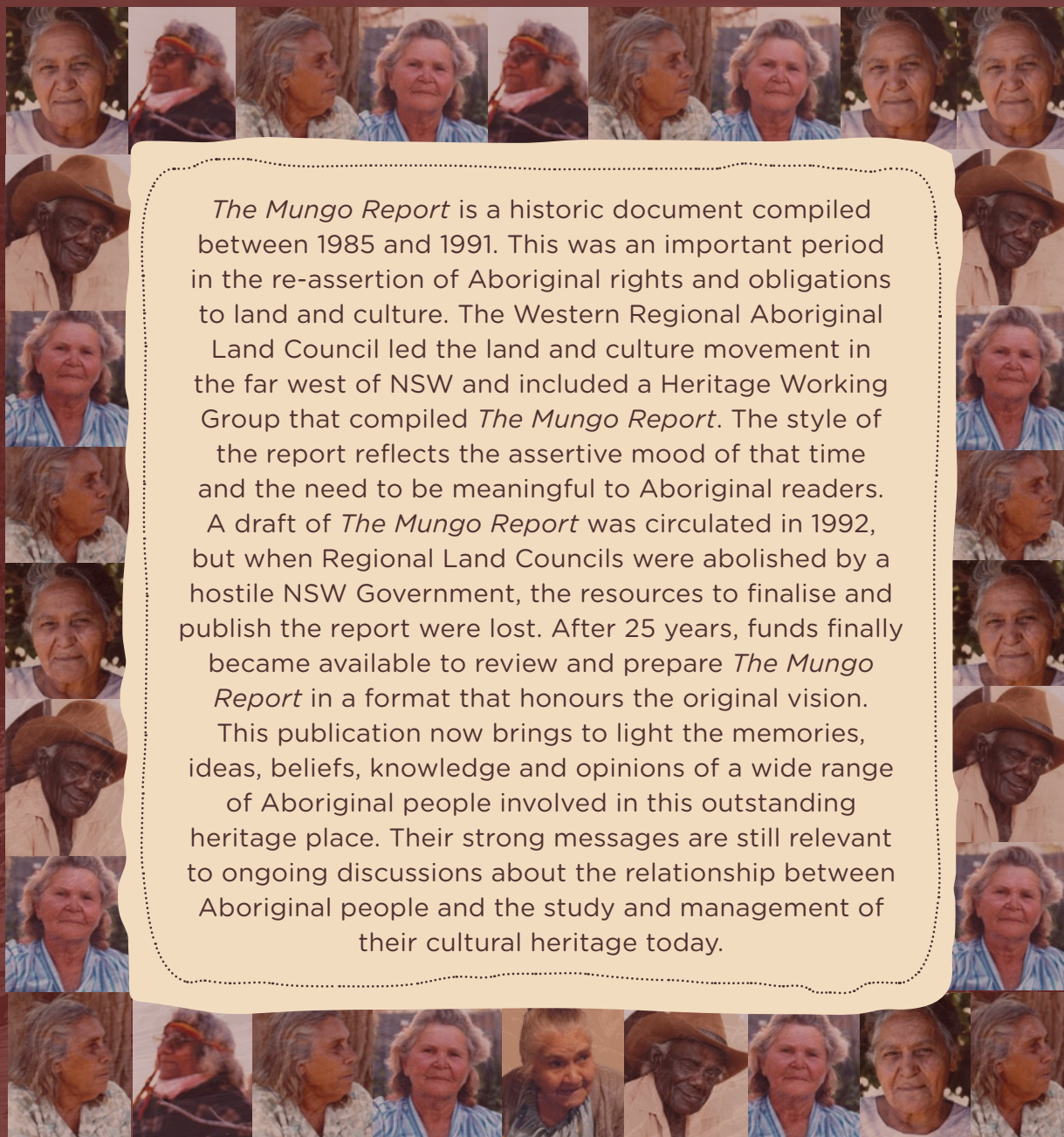
*A History of Aboriginal Communities in NSW, 1909 - 1939,* University of Sydney PhD thesis by Heather Goodall, 1982. [Mentions many places and groups of Aboriginal people in early 20th Century.]

*Lament for the Barkindji* by Bobbie Hardy. Published in 1976 by Rigby, Adelaide. [Lots of historical information from the far west of NSW.]

*West of the Darling* by Bobbie Hardy. Published in 1969 by Rigby, Adelaide. [Mainly about non-Aboriginal people, includes some information from east of the Darling.]

*Notes on some Tribes of New South Wales* by A.L.P. Cameron. Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, 1885, Volume 14: pages 344 to 370. [Cameron was a station manager who made notes about the people in the region around Lake Mungo.]

*Two expeditions into the interior of Southern Australia* by Charles Sturt. First Published 1833 by Smith, Elder and Co, London. Facimile published 1999 by Corkwood Press, Adelaide. [Sturt travelled along the Murray and lower Darling Rivers in 1829-30.]



*The Mungo Report* is a historic document compiled between 1985 and 1991. This was an important period in the re-assertion of Aboriginal rights and obligations to land and culture. The Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council led the land and culture movement in the far west of NSW and included a Heritage Working Group that compiled *The Mungo Report*. The style of the report reflects the assertive mood of that time and the need to be meaningful to Aboriginal readers. A draft of *The Mungo Report* was circulated in 1992, but when Regional Land Councils were abolished by a hostile NSW Government, the resources to finalise and publish the report were lost. After 25 years, funds finally became available to review and prepare *The Mungo Report* in a format that honours the original vision. This publication now brings to light the memories, ideas, beliefs, knowledge and opinions of a wide range of Aboriginal people involved in this outstanding heritage place. Their strong messages are still relevant to ongoing discussions about the relationship between Aboriginal people and the study and management of their cultural heritage today.

SHORT COMMENTS (NO HEADS) BY ABORIGINAL PERSONS INVOLVED

(MAYBE ALICE, STEWART, JOHNNY Q, MARGY H, WAYNE, BARB)

COMMENT (NO HEAD) BY A NATIONALLY KNOWN HERITAGE IDENTITY

(MAYBE SHARON SULLIVAN OR MICK DODSON)

The Heritage Working Group of the Western Regional Aboriginal Land Council began work in 1984. In 1992 it became the Western Heritage Group Inc and has continued to work on a variety of oral history, language, heritage and publication projects. Most of the Group's projects are done by the members working together as volunteers.