

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service

# Boonalla Aboriginal Area

## Education Package



Office of  
Environment & Heritage  
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service



**Prepared for**

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**Prepared in consultation with the Office of Environment and Heritage by:**

PeeKdesigns | [www.peekdesigns.com.au](http://www.peekdesigns.com.au)

**Acknowledgements:**

National Parks and Wildlife Services and Boonalla Aboriginal Area Co-Management Committee  
Cover photos: K. Coleman / PeeKdesigns

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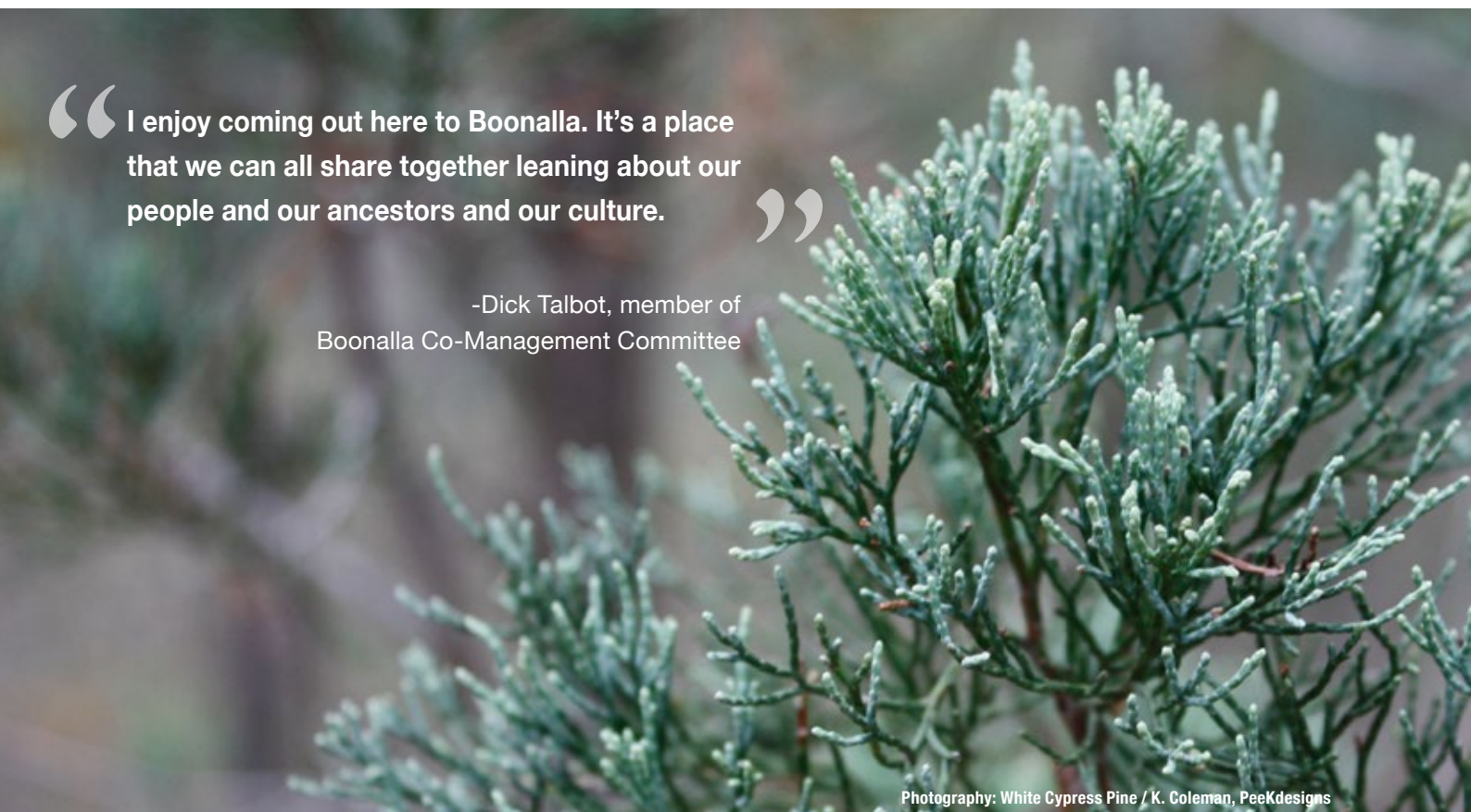


# *Yammandi-Ga Boonalla Murri Dhuwan.*

Welcome to Boonalla Aboriginal Area.

The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service welcomes you to Boonalla Aboriginal Area. It is a unique place having strong Aboriginal connections to Country, dating back 4,300 years. There remains evidence of this today along with numerous threatened species and endangered ecological communities, which once thrived in the local landscape.

*Come, discover, appreciate!*



“ I enjoy coming out here to Boonalla. It's a place that we can all share together learning about our people and our ancestors and our culture. ”

-Dick Talbot, member of  
Boonalla Co-Management Committee

Photography: White Cypress Pine / K. Coleman, PeeKdesigns

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# Welcome to Country

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A “Welcome to Country” is where the traditional Aboriginal custodians (in most cases, Elders) welcome people to their land. This is a significant recognition and is made through a formal process. The “Welcome to Country” is conducted by a representative/s of the local Aboriginal custodians who welcome the delegates, those in attendance, invited guests, staff and students to their country. Protocols in relation to the performing of a “Welcome to Country” ceremony are wide and diverse and can vary according to region and locality.

A “Welcome to Country” may consist of a single speech by the representative/s of the local Aboriginal community, or it can also include a performance (which will vary according to region and locality). Performances may include a traditional welcoming song, a traditional dance, didgeridoo performance or a combination of the aforementioned.

## Acknowledgement of Country

“Acknowledgement of Country” is a way the wider community can demonstrate respect for Aboriginal protocol and can be performed by any party that is participating in an occasion of any kind.

“Acknowledgement of Country” can be performed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. It is a demonstration of respect dedicated to the traditional custodians of the land where the gathering of participants is being conducted.

### EXAMPLE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

*I would like to pay my respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land on which this meeting takes place, and also pay respect to Elders both past and present*

For more details about the protocol of conducting a Welcome or Acknowledgement to Country:  
[www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/dethome/yr2005/welcomecountry.pdf](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/media/downloads/dethome/yr2005/welcomecountry.pdf)

“ We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the Boonalla, Kelvin and Gunnedah region and thank them for sharing their knowledge and culture with the wider public.

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people should be aware that this document may contain images and/or names of people who have since passed away. ”



Photography: Opening of new facilities at Boonalla Aboriginal Area, NAIDOC Week 2013 / OEH

# About this resource

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This education package provides teachers with excursion activities to Boonalla Aboriginal Area for Stage 1 to 3 of the NSW Syllabus. Boonalla Aboriginal Area is located within the Gomeroi (also written as Gamilaroi, Gamilaraay and Kamilaroi) nation. It has been developed in consultation with the Boonalla Aboriginal Area Co-management Committee to create a resource that allows the traditional owners of Boonalla and the National Parks and Wildlife Services to share their knowledge of this special place.

Each section of this package is broken down into the following:

## **SITE DETAILS**

This section provides details about the site and what you can find there. This background content can be used by anyone, and they can help further research into the site for classroom activities. Included within this section are some Point of Interest that may be seen on the walk to Boonalla Cave. Additional reference materials can be found in the Appendix.

## **SCHOOL EXCURSIONS**

This education package has been designed to achieve the 5 of the 9 outcomes under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curricula priority, as well as incorporating these outcomes across other core learning areas and thereby providing a more holistic unit of work. This section outlines the various cross-curricula priorities, additional syllabus outcomes, suggested excursion itineraries as well as a risk management assessment that has been completed for the site.

Before any excursion to Boonalla Aboriginal Area, it is highly recommended to download and review the “What is a National Park?” Teacher’s Guide - <http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/edresources/TeachersKitNationalpark.htm>. In particular, Lessons 1, 2, 6, 7, 10 and 11. This resource covers a variety of subject matter and a range of issues relating to national parks including: what they are, why we have them, the natural environment, Aboriginal perspectives on the natural environment, the roles and responsibilities of national park workers, and national park management.

## **STAGE 1**

All of the year 1 and 2 (or Stage 1) student activities have been designed for completion at the Boonalla Picnic Area. Due to the steep nature of the walk to the Boonalla Cave, it will be at the teacher’s discretion if they take the students up to the cave. These activities focus on science, creative arts and language topics of Gomeroi culture.

## **STAGE 2**

Two of the four year 3 and 4 (or Stage 2) student activities have been designed for completion at the Boonalla Picnic Area. Whilst the other two activities are designed to be completed on the walk up to the Boonalla Cave. These activities focus on science, creative arts and history topics of Gomeroi culture.

## **STAGE 3**

Two of the four year 5 and 6 (or Stage 3) student activities have been designed for completion at the Boonalla Picnic Area. Whilst the other two activities are designed to be completed on the walk up to the Boonalla Cave. These activities focus on science, geography and creative arts topics of Gomeroi culture.

## **OTHER REFERENCE MATERIALS**

Gomeroi language has been incorporated throughout this package to help users familiarise themselves with the traditional language. A glossary of terms, along with pronunciation, has been provided in the back of this document. This section of the package also includes general references and websites that can be used for further research.



# Site Details

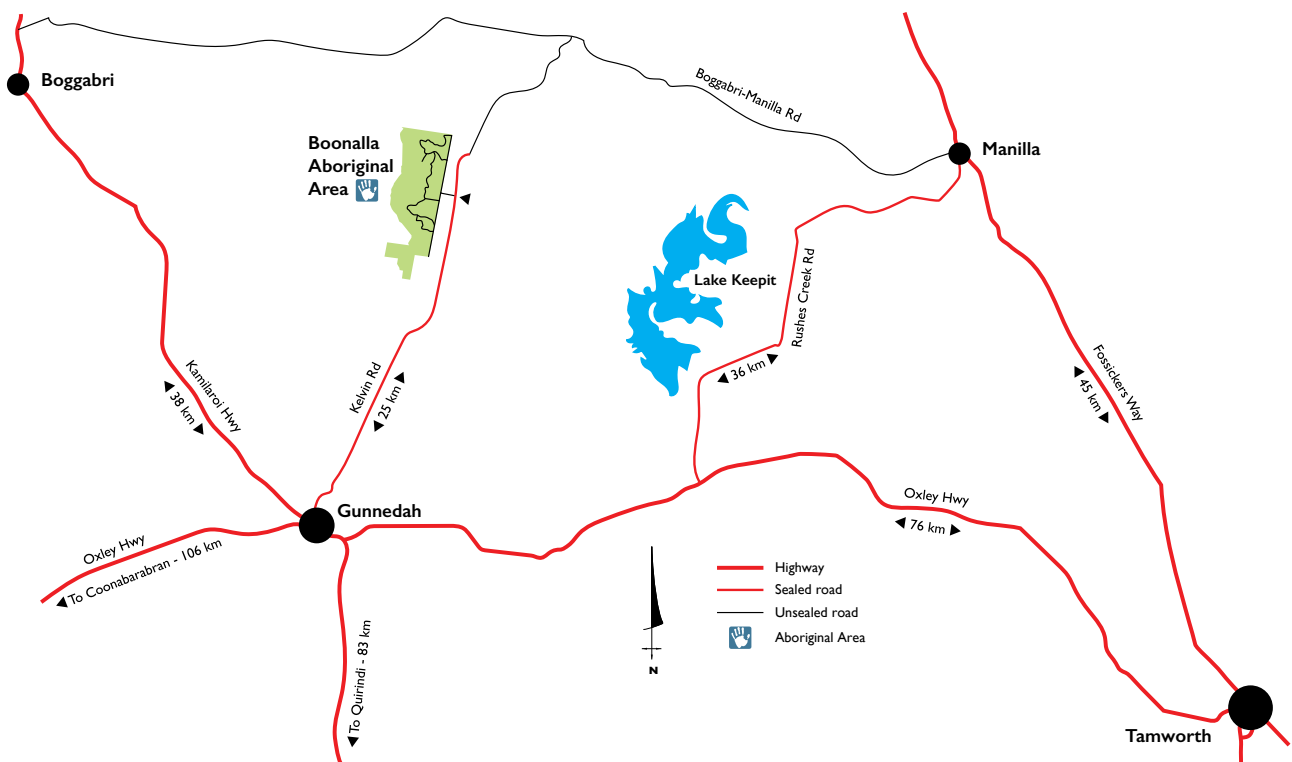
## Getting here

From Gunnedah, cross the Namoi River and travel north along Kelvin Road towards the range that rises on the horizon. After 21 kilometres you reach the locality of Kelvin. Another 4.5 kilometres north you take a left hand turn into the entrance of Boonalla Aboriginal Area where signs will then guide you to the picnic area. The cave car park is 3 kilometres from the picnic area following the signs on the reserve management road network. An 850 metre return walk then takes you up to Boonalla Cave.

All visitors are to stay in the northern half of the reserve and are asked to refrain from visiting in wet conditions due to the bogging hazard and slippery rocks on the cave walk.

## Site access

Large buses can access the picnic area but not the cave walk. A 22-seat Coaster is the maximum size vehicle for the road from the picnic area to the cave walk due to steep washouts on the road and limited turning in the upper car park.



Photography: K. Coleman, PeekKdesigns

## About the cave walk

The cave walk is steep in sections, involving some steps and a handrail to assist walking up a steep, sometimes slippery, rocky incline. Because of this, it is not suitable for small children and will require a moderate rate of fitness. It is recommended not to attempt walking the track in wet or foggy conditions.

## Site facilities

The site consists of the following facilities

- Parking
- Walking Track
- Aboriginal Site
- Information Bay
- Barbeques
- Picnic Area
- Shelter
- Toilets

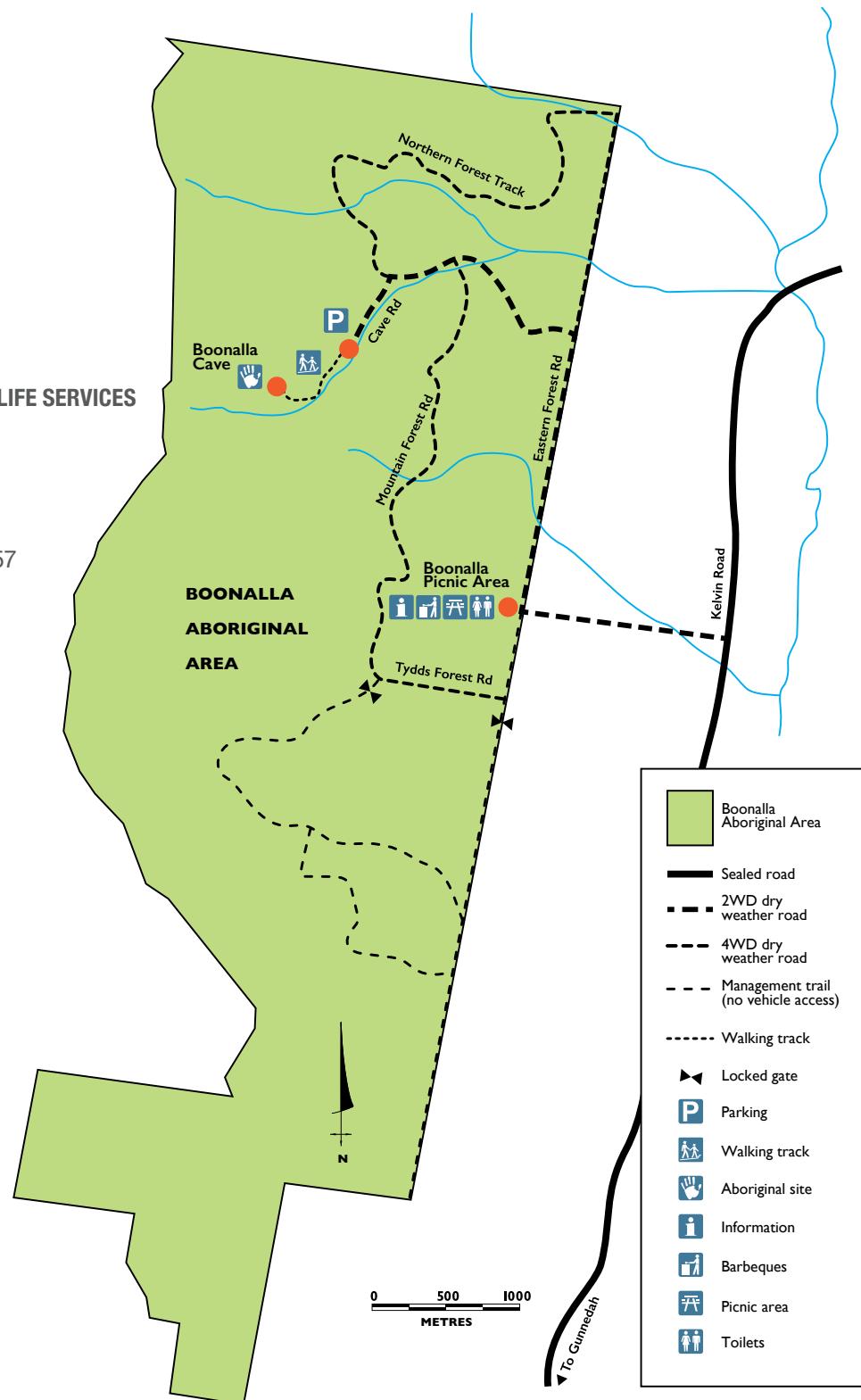
## Site contacts

**NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICES  
COONABARABRAN**

Phone: 02 6842 1311

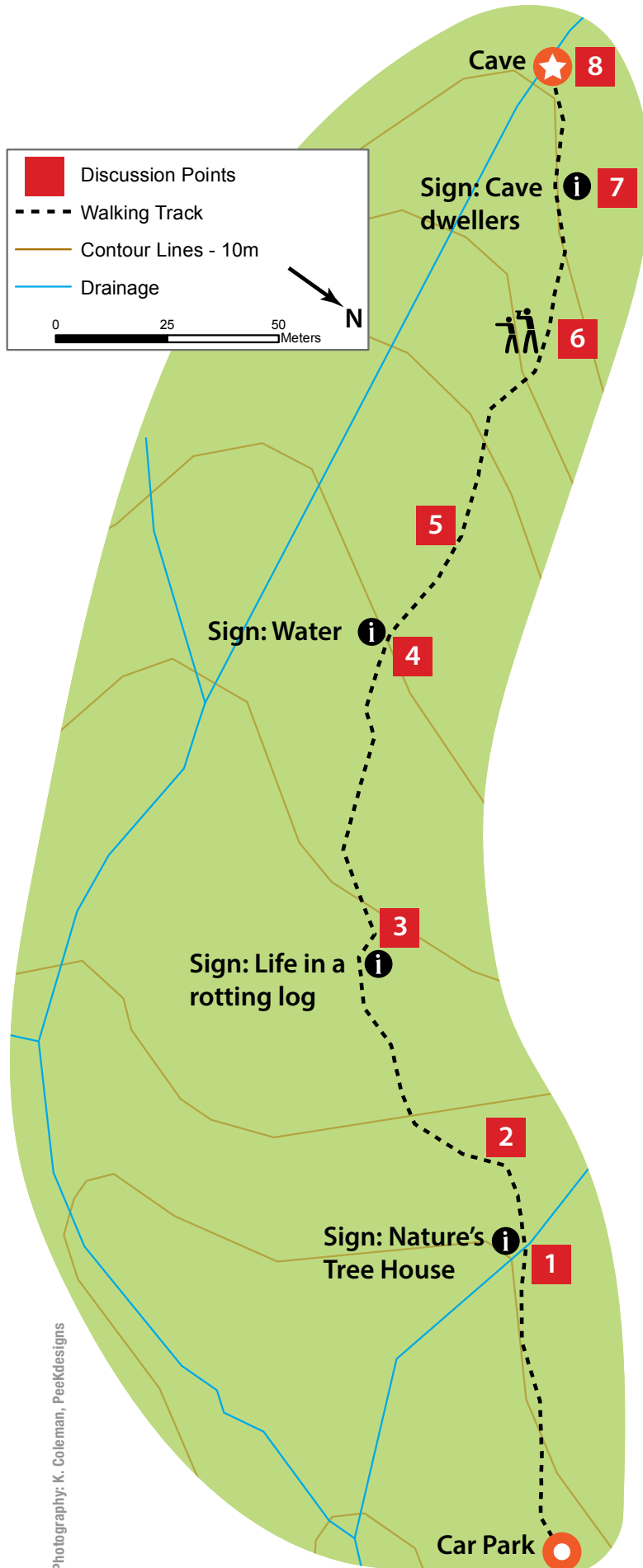
Street address:  
30 Timor Street,  
Coonabarabran NSW 2357

Opening hours:  
8:30 am - 4:30 pm  
Monday-Friday





# Walking track - Points of interest



## 1: Useful Resources

Discussion point 1 is located at the first interpretive sign called "Nature's Tree House". On the right hand side, as you walk over and look up the gully, you will notice clumps of strappy, grass-like plants (below). This is called mat rush or lomandra. This plant is commonly used in weaving to make baskets and nets. The seeds from this plant can also be collected, roasted and ground into a flour for making bread.

**HOW MANY MAT RUSH SEEDS WOULD YOU HAVE TO COLLECT TO MAKE SOME BUSH BREAD?**



"Nature's Tree House" refers to the hollows that can be found in our old trees. Most trees have to be at least 100 years old before a hollow will start to form. The older the tree, the larger and more abundant the hollows will be.

**SEE IF YOU CAN FIND SOME TREE HOLLOW AS YOU LOOK AROUND THIS FIRST STOP.**

## 2: The Timber Industry

The native cypress pine and ironbark trees have been harvested commercially in the region since the early 1900s, and the local Gomeri people have been harvesting the trees for thousands of years before that. These trees are such a valued timber for construction purposes as they are naturally resistant to termites, unlike European pine trees which make up a bulk of the Australian timber industry. This area was proclaimed a state forest in 1920 for the purposes of harvesting timber. It remained this way right up until 2005 when it was dedicated as an Aboriginal Area under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

**Ironbark** (thiinyaay) has many traditional uses for Aboriginal people, including shelter, habitat, medicine, timber, bark, oil and food. Ironbark is well known for its very strong and hard wood which is prized for making both broad and narrow shields. (McKemey and White, 2011)

The resin of the **cypress pines** (gurraari) is used as glue or cementing agent while the long branches can be used to make canoe poles which double as fish spears. The smoke from the leaves has healing properties. (McKemey and White, 2011)



### 3: Nature's Recyclers

When walking around the bush you might think it looks 'messy' with all the logs that are left lying on the ground. These logs play an important role in the ecosystem.

Insects and fungi are nature's recyclers and they are the first to appear on fallen or rotting logs. They start to break down the fibrous material of the wood, and while they do this, they attract other animals such as birds and small mammals like echidnas. Once hollows start forming, if they aren't already there, reptiles and frogs might move in for a feed on the other insects and small animals.

Without rotting logs our bush would be a very boring place with very few places for animals to find shelter, food and even small amounts of water.

**IF YOU WERE A FROG OR LIZARD WOULD YOU LIKE TO LIVE IN A ROTTING LOG? DISCUSS AMONGST YOURSELVES.**

**HOW MANY ANIMALS CAN YOU SEE ON THE SIGN?**



### 4: Waterholes in the Gully

Water is vital for the survival of all living things. The Gomeri people who once lived in the cave would have needed a source of water nearby for drinking and washing if they lived here for many months of the year. Waterholes are also good spots for attracting larger animals that can be hunted for food.

**CAN YOU FIND THE NEARBY WATERHOLE?**

### 5: Kurrajongs and the climb

At the beginning of the stairs you will pass a kurrajong (**nhimin**) tree. Kurrajongs are a highly versatile tree for the Gomeri people. The seeds can be eaten, and when roasted and ground they can make a drink similar to coffee. The young roots can be eaten like vegetables and they are a good source of water when water is scarce. The gum can be used as a glue and the inner bark can be turned into twine for making nets...the list goes on. Kurrajongs are very recognisable in the bush by their dark green, glossy leaves that have a distinctive tear-drop shape, as well as their large dropping seed pods. See page 12 for more details about the kurrajong.

#### **SAFETY MESSAGE**

Before you climb up the stairs to the lookout, provide your group with a safety message about climbing the steep slopes ahead.

1. **Hold onto the hand rail at all times.**
2. Stay on the right hand side of the hand rail.
3. Go slowly and carefully.
4. If you are in trouble, ask for help.
5. Once at the lookout do not go any further, wait for the rest of the group and be careful not to go close to the edge.





### 6: Lookout

At the lookout there is a seat (above left) and cleared area so that you can see the hills in the distance that surround Lake Keepit (top). If you turn around and look up at the hill, you can see that the large granite mound (above right), and therefore the cave, is very protected from any intruders - making the cave safe for the people who once lived there.

**HOW HIGH DO YOU THINK YOU ARE HERE?  
IT'S ABOUT 525 METRES ABOVE SEA LEVEL.**

### 7: Vine Thicket

As you near the cave you will notice that the vegetation has changed considerably. It is very dense, lots of whippy vines and you might have to duck under some of the plants. You might also notice that it is colder and wetter here too. This gully doesn't see much sunlight and the plants growing here like it nice and moist. This is called a Semi-Evergreen Vine Thicket vegetation community

Photography: K. Coleman, PeekKdesigns



(below left). The grouping of plants like this is not very common in New South Wales anymore and it is classified as a Threatened Ecological Community.

**IMAGING LIVING UP HERE THOUSANDS OF YEARS AGO. THE THICK VEGETATION WOULD HAVE BEEN GOOD CAMOUFLAGE FOR THE FAMILY LIVING HERE.**

### 8: The Cave

In 2012, archaeologists excavated a two metre pit at the entrance of the cave to find evidence of habitation. What they uncovered was 4,000 years, possibly more, of evidence including stone artefacts, animal bones and a deep charcoal layer indicating a fireplace. Since Europeans pushed the Gomeri people off this land in the 1800s and 1900s, the cave has been graffitied, feral goats have been in the cave degrading the walls and people have explored the far reaches of the cave where the eastern cave bats roost. National Park Rangers work hard to protect the cave and look after its historical heritage.



# School Excursions

## Syllabus outcomes

This package has been prepared for Stage 1 to 3 of the NSW Syllabus for the Australian Curriculum. Each Stage consists of four (4) activities that can be completed during the excursion. The syllabus outlines below have been prepared to help teachers align their activities with required curriculum outcomes that can be achieved by participating in the excursion activities identified in this resource. Each Stage includes teachers notes for activity delivery, student activity sheets and suggested pre- and post-activities to further develop student understanding of the topic.

This education package has been designed to achieve the 5 of the 9 outcomes under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures cross-curricula priority, as well as incorporating these outcomes across other core learning areas and thereby providing a more holistic unit of work.



Code	Organising idea	Stage 1				Stage 2				Stage 3			
		S1.1	S1.2	S1.3	S1.4	S2.1	S2.2	S2.3	S2.4	S3.1	S3.2	S3.3	S3.4
Country/Place													
OI.2	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities maintain a special connection to and responsibility for Country/Place.			✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
OI.3	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples have holistic belief systems and are spiritually and intellectually connected to the land, sea, sky and waterways.		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓			✓		
Culture													
OI.4	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander societies have many Language Groups.	✓	✓		✓								
OI.5	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' ways of life are uniquely expressed through ways of being, knowing, thinking and doing.	✓		✓				✓	✓			✓	✓
OI.6	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples live in Australia as first peoples of Country or Place and demonstrate resilience in responding to historic and contemporary impacts of colonisation.	✓						✓		✓			

## Other syllabus outcomes

The activities within this education package have been developed to meet a range of outcomes pertaining to the Science, Creative Arts, Languages, Geography and History NSW K-10 Syllabuses. These outcomes are described below.

STAGE 1	S1-2	<b>Science</b> ST1-11LW: A student describes ways that different places in the environment provide for the needs of living things.
	S1-3	<b>Creative Arts - Drama</b> DRAS1.1: A student takes on roles in drama to explore familiar and imagined situations. DRAS1.2: A student conveys story, depicts events and expresses feelings by using the elements of drama and the expressive skills of movement and voice. DRAS1.3: A student interacts collaboratively to communicate the action of the drama with others.
	S1-4	<b>Aboriginal Languages</b> I.UL.1: A student recognises and responds to words, phrases and simple sentences in Aboriginal languages. I.UL.3: A student uses known words in Aboriginal languages to interact in everyday activities.
STAGE 2	S2-2	<b>Science</b> ST2-10LW: A student describes that living things have life cycles, can be distinguished from non-living things and grouped, based on their observable features.
	S2-3	<b>Science</b> ST2-13MW: A student identifies the physical properties of natural and processed materials, and how these properties influence their use.
	S2-4	<b>Creative Arts - Drama</b> DRAS2.2: A student Builds the action of the drama by using the elements of drama, movement and voice skills. <b>History</b> HT2.3: A student describes people, events and actions related to world exploration and its effects.
STAGE 3	S3-1	<b>Geography</b> GE3-2: A student explains interactions and connections between people, places and environments.
	S3-2	<b>Science</b> ST3-10LW: A student describes how structural features and other adaptations of living things help them to survive in their environment. <b>Geography</b> GE3-3: A student compares and contrasts influences on the management of places and environments.
	S3-3	<b>Science</b> ST3-5WT: A student plans and implements a design process, selecting a range of tools, equipment, materials and techniques to produce solutions that address the design criteria and identified constraints. ST3-13MW: A student describes how the properties of materials determine their use for specific purposes.
	S3-4	<b>Creative Arts - Drama</b> DRAS3.2: A student interprets and conveys dramatic meaning by using the elements of drama and a range of movement and voice skills in a variety of drama forms. DRAS3.3: A student devises, acts and rehearses drama for performance to an audience.

# Suggested itinerary

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## SUITABLE FOR LOCAL SCHOOLS

- 9:30 am ARRIVE at the Boonalla Picnic Area  
Welcome to Boonalla presented by your Discovery Ranger/s  
Listen to a talk about Boonalla Aboriginal Area and the Cave
- 10:15 MORNING TEA
- 10:45 Option 1: Picnic Area  
Stage 1 and Stage 2 students conduct their activities and games. Stage 3 students travel to Boonalla Cave.  
Option 2: Boonalla Cave  
Stage 2 and Stage 3 students travel to Boonalla Cave and take the tour up to the Cave - *It is at the teachers discretion whether they permit the Stage 1 students to climb to Boonalla Cave.*
- 12:30 pm LUNCH
- 1:00 DEPART Boonalla and travel to the Red Chief Local Aboriginal Lands Council  
26A Chandos St, Gunnedah.
- 1:30 ARRIVE at the Red Chief Local Aboriginal Lands Council and tour the  
Cumbo Gunnerah Gallery and Keeping Place.
- 2:30 DEPART and travel back to school
- 3:00 ARRIVE BACK AT SCHOOL

\* Visits to the Cumbo Gunnerah Gallery and Keeping Place are by prior appointment only on 6742 3602.

We hope you enjoy your visit and ask that you consider the following:

- **Be self-reliant.** Carry the things you need for your comfort and safety.
- **Tread softly.** Keep walking parties small in number and use existing tracks wherever possible. Avoid fragile areas such as damp or mossy areas and brittle rock formations.
- **Be Safe.** Phone reception is patchy and not reliable.
- **Take your Rubbish with you.** Remove all rubbish including food scraps, paper, plastic, empty containers etc. Burning rubbish creates pollution and buried rubbish may be dug up and scattered by animals. Digging also disturbs soil which can cause erosion and encourage weeds.
- **Keep waters clean.** If you do find water please do not contaminate it with chemicals such as detergent or soap.
- **Protect Plants and Animals.** Try not to disturb the wildlife. Do not feed birds or animals as they may become pests and unnatural foods may be harmful. Try to walk around delicate plants. Give snakes a wide berth and leave them alone.
- **Respect Historic and Cultural Heritage.** Leave Aboriginal or Historical artefacts/sites as you find them.



*For any other excursion options, please contact the  
National Parks and Wildlife Services - Coonabarabran  
02 6842 1311 • 8:30am till 4:30pm*



# Stage 1

## Activity Summary

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**NOTE:** All Stage 1 activities have been designed for the Boonalla Picnic Area. It will be at the teacher's discretion if they take the students further up to the cave. See 'School Excursions' for details.

### *S1-1 Yaama!*

Students are introduced to the concept that the Gomeri people are just one of many Aboriginal nations across Australia. We know they live, and lived, here from the evidence that is left behind. Students are shown images of occupation evidence and they identify those items on their worksheet.

**Syllabus Links:** 🖐️OI.4, 🖐️OI.5, 🖐️OI.6

### *S1-2 Living things need...*

Students learn that there are four key things that all animals (including humans) need...shelter, food, water and air. They explore their immediate surroundings to find places that some local animals (bush tucker) might be found. Students match-up some traditional food items on their activity sheet with where they can be found in the bush. Discuss why that animal might need that place in the bush for its survival.

**Syllabus Links:** ST1-11LW, 🖐️OI.3, 🖐️OI.4

### *S1-3 Story and movement*

Students learn how Aboriginal culture is often expressed through storytelling, art, dance and music. Using movement and dance, students interpret different stages of the Dreaming story 'Emu in the Sky'.

**Syllabus Links:** DRAS1.1, DRAS1.2, DRAS1.3, 🖐️OI.2, 🖐️OI.3, 🖐️OI.5

### *S1-4 Boonalla 'Simon Says'*

Students learn Gomeri words for local plants and animals as well as some body parts. This is reinforced with a game of 'Simon Says'. An alternate activity is where students compare the differences and similarities between Gomeri and English words.

**Syllabus Links:** I.U.L.1, I.U.L.3, 🖐️OI.4

# Stage 2

## Activity Summary

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**NOTE:** Activities S2-1 and S2-2 have been designed for the Boonalla Cave Walk and activities S2-3 and S2-4 have been designed for the Boonalla Picnic Area.

### *S2-1 A walk back in time*

Students develop a sense of connection with the Gomeri people as they walk up to the cave. Students fill in their activity sheet with some of the things they see or experience on the walk that reflect this connection.

Syllabus Links: 🖐️OI.2, 🖐️OI.3

### *S2-2 Life in a cave*

Students learn about the different life that can be found in the cave, from the dark depths to the cave mouth. Given a family life scenario, students record what they imagine life for the original inhabitants would be like. This can be followed up with an activity that lets students research the eastern cave bat that now calls the cave home for periods of the year.

Syllabus Links: ST2-10LW, 🖐️OI.2, 🖐️OI.3

### *S2-3 Using local resources*

Students investigate the different properties of the surrounding resources and how they are used with the assistance of touching and looking at some local artefacts.

Syllabus Links: ST2-13MW, 🖐️OI.2, 🖐️OI.3, 🖐️OI.5, 🖐️OI.6

### *S2-4 Family life*

Students discover some of the tools that would be used in a traditional Gomeri camp. They use mime, and the tools, to act-out traditional Gomeri camp life in front of the group.

Syllabus Links: DRAS2.2, HT2.3, 🖐️OI.5





# Stage 3

## Activity Summary

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**NOTE:** Activities S3-1 and S3-2 have been designed for the Boonalla Cave and activities S3-3 and S3-4 have been designed for the Boonalla Picnic Area.

### *S3-1 A digital journey to the cave*

Students use digital devices (such as cameras and tablets) to record as much as they can while on the excursion. They can write thoughts, feelings, ideas down on their activity sheet. This activity can be followed up in the classroom by students preparing a recount presentation on “Experiencing Culture at Boonalla” using photos, videos, drawings and comments recorded on the day.

**Syllabus Links:** GE3-2, 🗋️OI.2, 🗋️OI.6

### *S3-2 Looking after Boonalla*

Students learn about the impact feral animals are having on Boonalla and the cave. They record the actions that National Park Rangers are undertaking to protect Boonalla Cave from feral animals. This activity can be pre-cluded with an investigation into what ‘adaptations’ are and identifying plant and animal (including humans) adaptations that help them to survive.

**Syllabus Links:** ST3-10LW, GE3-3, 🗋️OI.2, 🗋️OI.3

### *S3-3 Traditional technology*

Students learn about how boomerangs are a great symbol of traditional technology and that there are different boomerangs for different uses. Students handle real boomerangs and then identify from a set of drawings the different types of boomerangs that can be made.

**Syllabus Links:** ST3-5WT, ST3-13MW, 🗋️OI.5

### *S3-4 What’s your totem?*

Students are introduced to the importance of totems. In small groups, students are assigned a local animal to be their honorary totem. As a group, students discuss habitat values of their totem and prepare a short presentation that they will conduct in front of the rest of the class group.

**Syllabus Links:** DRAS3.2, DRAS3.3, 🗋️OI.2, 🗋️OI.5



**NATIONAL PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE - COONABARABRAN OFFICE**

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Street address: 30 Timor Street, Coonabarabran NSW 2357

Postal address: PO Box 39, Coonabarabran NSW 2357

Opening hours: 8:30 am - 4:30 pm, Monday-Friday



**Office of  
Environment & Heritage**  
NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service

