



Minjerribah Protected Area Expansion Strategy

Expanding national park on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island)

Image courtesy of Tourism and Events Queensland.

Quandamooka People invite you to walk country that once only our people traversed. We share our country and culture in the hope that you may appreciate and will care for it as we do.

Artwork featured throughout by Shara Delaney | Noonuccal, Goenpul and Ngugi peoples
Minjerrabah Futures 2018 | Acrylic on canvas

Artist statement: This artwork is inspired by Minjerrabah, also known as North Stradbroke Island. The 'U' shapes around the main circle represent everyone in the community. It is important to have a strong community and support one another. This means uniting to support friends, family and neighbours, as well as the current and new industries on the island as the economy transitions from sand mining.

The focus of the pattern in the middle is the Queensland Government's commitment to supporting the community through the economic transition strategy and how we have to unite around it. The colours represent Quandamooka waters. Our totems the dolphin (Buangan) and carpet snake (Kabul) are our identity. Yalingbila, the whale, is a frequent visitor to our island and symbolises welcoming those who visit Country.



Minister's foreword

The Queensland Government has been delivering on its commitment to phase out sandmining on Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) through the implementation of *Minjerribah Futures*, a \$20 million program which focuses on exploring new, sustainable economic opportunities for Minjerribah.

Expanding protected areas on the island is a key *Minjerribah Futures* project. Boasting rich natural ecosystems which support a diverse flora and fauna, and possessing significant cultural values, Minjerribah's landscape has been an important inclusion in Queensland's protected area estate.

National parks generate many benefits for the environment, economy and local community. The island's future sustainability lies in showcasing and effectively managing its high conservation and rich cultural heritage values, while presenting residents, visitors and future generations opportunities to connect meaningfully with Minjerribah.

The *Minjerribah Protected Area Expansion Strategy* outlines the staged expansion of the national park and other protected areas on Minjerribah which currently covers about half of the island. This staged expansion will be undertaken by the Quandamooka People and the Queensland Government, who already have a successful partnership caring for the island's Naree Budjong Djara National Park.

It is envisaged that with staged investments, a large majority of Minjerribah will eventually become protected (around 80 per cent). This will mean more of the island's unique natural environment will be safeguarded, balanced with increased visitor access and facilities, such as walking tracks, as well as greater opportunities to incorporate traditional knowledge in the way protected land is managed.

This Strategy represents the next exciting phase in nurturing Minjerribah's outstanding environmental and cultural values—for the benefit of Queenslanders and all Australians.

Shannon Fentiman MP

Minister for Employment and Small Business
Minister for Training and Skills Development



Chief Executive Officer's foreword

Yura!

Naree Budjong Djara means *My Mother Earth* in Jandai.

As Quandamooka People we are all taught to respect our mother, she provides us with everything we need, and as long as we care for her, she will look after us.

Our country, all of the species we share our country with, and us are all one, interconnected through time to place.

This strategy respects our spiritual and physical relationship with our lands, our desire to continue to make decisions about how to care for and protect these lands, and how to share our place, and knowledge with everyone who comes to love and respect our lands.

We are very thankful that the original vision, the promise made to the Quandamooka People and people of South East Queensland at our determination on 4 July 2011, will be kept.

We will be putting out the first Naree Budjong Djara Management Plan in early 2020 for community consultation, we encourage you to add your voice and ideas to the future health of Naree Budjong Djara.

Cameron Costello

Chief Executive Officer
Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation



Introduction

Minjerribah (North Stradbroke Island) is a place of incredible cultural significance, a sanctuary that has been cared for by its owners and custodians, the Quandamooka People, for many thousands of years. The island boasts extremely high conservation values including diverse habitats—from endangered heathlands and wetlands, to freshwater lakes, coastal escarpments, littoral rainforest and sub-tropical coastal vine thickets—which are home to a variety of unique animals and plants.

Protected areas play a vital role in maintaining and protecting the island’s special habitats, ecosystems and wildlife.

Around half (13,875 hectares) of Minjerribah is currently protected area including Naree Budjong Djara (My Mother Earth) National Park.

To maintain and nurture the island’s biodiversity and rich Quandamooka culture for future generations, the amount of land on Minjerribah dedicated as a protected area is proposed to be expanded significantly over the coming years.

The priority will be to protect and reserve areas of high conservation and cultural value.

This strategy outlines how the proposed expansion of protected areas on the island will be undertaken in a staged approach in the short, medium and long-term.

Vision

Minjerribah’s outstanding cultural and natural values are safeguarded now and into the future by expanding the island’s protected areas with the consent of the Quandamooka People, the island’s Traditional Owners, and managed jointly by the Queensland Government and the Quandamooka People.



Background

In 2011, the Quandamooka People were recognised as native title holders for the majority of Minjerribah. Since then, the Quandamooka Yoolooburrabee Aboriginal Corporation (QYAC)—the prescribed body corporate for the Quandamooka People—has worked with partners in government, tourism, education, research, business and the community on ways to build a sustainable future for Minjerribah.

This has involved a range of initiatives under the North Stradbroke Island Transition Strategy, now referred to as *Minjerribah Futures*, to support the growth of ecologically and culturally sustainable opportunities in preparation for the substantial end to sandmining by late 2019, which will be phased out by 2025.

The aim is to position Minjerribah as a globally recognised eco and cultural tourism destination, celebrating a rich Quandamooka culture, the natural environment and arts; expand education and training opportunities, support economic development and growth; and, build new infrastructure that improves island lifestyle.

In total, 23 initiatives are being implemented as part of *Minjerribah Futures*. One of the initiatives is to **develop a strategy for expanding the island's national parks and other protected areas and for the staged transfer of expired mining leases with funded joint management arrangements.**

Outcomes

Expanding Minjerribah's protected area estate will result in a number of employment, cultural and conservation benefits for the local community, environment and economy:

Better protected cultural and natural values

With the expansion of the national park, more of the island's unique cultural and natural environment will be protected and managed appropriately, pending resources and funding, including lakes, heathland, swamps, forests, wetlands, physical and spiritual cultural values, rare and threatened flora, and diverse wildlife.

New jobs in land management

Employment opportunities will be generated directly for the Quandamooka People and island community as a result of expanding the joint managed protected area on the island. New permanent positions such as park rangers will be appointed to manage the protected area, and conduct fire, pest, and visitor management; infrastructure maintenance; cultural heritage recording and protection; and biodiversity and species monitoring.

Improved visitor access to country

Increasing the island's protected area estate will enable improved access and opportunities for visitors to explore the island including, where appropriate, new walking tracks and experiences into places that were previously not publicly accessible.

Improved cultural knowledge sharing

Quandamooka cultural knowledge will be shared where appropriate through increased joint management activities on-park, consistent with Quandamooka People's traditions. This will help ensure Quandamooka beliefs, practices, knowledge, and expertise about Caring for Country is recognised and implemented in land and sea management across more areas of the island.

Effective management resourcing

Give effective future management of protected areas pending adequate resourcing and funding for short, medium and long term expansion areas.



Guiding principles

This Strategy for protected area expansion will be guided by the following principles:

- The identification, recording, and recognition of the island's highest quality natural values and significant cultural heritage, unique flora and fauna, landforms, ecosystems and habitat.
- The aspirations of the Quandamooka People for land post-mining, including their commercial eco and cultural tourism interests, is a priority for consideration prior to any staged expansion of the protected area estate.
- The rights, responsibilities, knowledge, values and beliefs of Quandamooka People will be respected through formalised joint management arrangements in the expansion of the protected area estate.
- To create greater conservation and cultural landscape connectivity by capturing and amalgamating highly significant areas, reconfiguring allotments from previous land uses where appropriate, into the protected area estate.



Caring for Country

Quandamooka People have cared for and nurtured the outstanding cultural and natural values of Minjerribah through knowledge passed on over many thousands of years.

Rangers on Minjerribah's existing Naree Budjong Djara National Park are skilled in conservation work and draw upon their experience in managing Country, intergenerational knowledge sharing and formal conservation and land management qualifications to manage their land and sea.



Strategy objectives

The Strategy aims to achieve the following objectives:

Identify and secure appropriate areas as part of a staged expansion.	Identify suitable areas with the consent of landholders for the staged addition of high conservation and cultural value and other areas to joint-managed protected areas.
Work with partners and stakeholders on an effective land transfer.	Provide for the coordinated and planned addition of protected areas by considering the natural and cultural values, environmental authority requirements, to the satisfaction of current and potential future landholders and managers.
Prepare for and coordinate effective management of resources and measures.	Consider the conservation and cultural values of the land and the on-ground and joint management requirements necessary to effectively manage these lands into the future.
Deliver effective on-going joint management and protection of the expanded estate.	Implement and fund the on-going management actions necessary to permanently protect and jointly manage the high cultural and conservation values of the island.

Delivering the Strategy

Minjerribah's staged protected area expansion will be undertaken in partnership between the Quandamooka People and the Queensland Government.

This joint management arrangement is formalised in the form of Indigenous joint management areas declared under the *Nature Conservation Act 1992*, which establishes a continued partnership with the government's Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service.

The declaration of new stages of protected areas will be guided by Quandamooka People's aspirations, and will prioritise natural and cultural values and also factor in coordination with existing *Minjerribah Futures* projects, mining tenure holders, existing mining lease expiration, environmental authority requirements and other considerations.

Additionally, new protected areas will also consider connectivity with existing protected areas, and may require reconfiguring allotments prior to dedication to remove highly disturbed areas in favour of high conservation and/or culturally significant areas.

Specifically any addition and associated timing to protected area will need to consider:

- site identification and suitability in regard to Quandamooka cultural aspirations, as well as nature conservation management principles
- irreplaceability, as well as protected area principles such as comprehensive, adequate and representative (CAR) considerations.
- existing mining and environmental authority constraints
- timeframes for transition, which are dependent on the resolution of mining lease surrenders and other *Minjerribah Futures* initiatives
- fulfilling environmental authority requirements (including land rehabilitation and land decontamination, where relevant)
- finalising surveying and other tenure related matters (including the granting of Aboriginal freehold land)
- future management and resourcing requirements
- preparation of land management and service agreements with QYAC for the management of future protected areas.

Areas of conservation significance

Short-term priority areas include areas of coastal heathland, freshwater wetlands and eucalypt forests/woodlands. They have conservation significance due to the coastal areas being largely adjacent to the Moreton Bay Ramsar area—a wetland of international importance—as well as areas around Myora containing critically endangered littoral rainforest and sub-tropical coastal vine thickets. The Flinders Swamp supports populations of near-threatened terrestrial orchid, and the coastal escarpment is one of the best preserved Holocene beachhead series in the world.

Protecting island biodiversity

Minjerribah has very high conservation values and a diversity of habitats, including the following:

- Freshwater aquatic habitats, including perched and water table window lakes that support unique frogs, fish and other aquatic species.
- Peatlands, such as Eighteen Mile Swamp, which has two nationally threatened fish species—the Oxleyan pygmy perch and honey blue-eye and acid loving frogs/froglets.
- Coastal Littoral Rainforest areas such as Myora and Eighteen Mile Swamp which comprise a nationally threatened ecological community under the *Commonwealth Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*.
- Plant species, including three endangered, three vulnerable and five near threatened flora species. Noteworthy is the endangered swamp daisy (*Olearia hygrophila*), which is endemic on Minjerribah.
- Native fauna species, including 244 birds, 34 reptiles, 17 frogs and 18 mammal species, including beach-stone curlew, little tern, koala, burrowing skink, death adder, several wallum frog species and the water mouse.
- High tide roost sites used by around 20 wader bird species, such as the eastern curlew and bartailed godwit.
- Large wetland areas on Minjerribah and within the boundaries of the Moreton Bay Ramsar site, recognised as a wetland of international importance.

Protecting cultural heritage

Minjerribah has high cultural heritage value to the Quandamooka People and can be considered to have high cultural heritage significance to Australia as a whole, this includes the following:

- The oldest published archaeological site on the east coast of Australia, dating to the Pleistocene with an occupation site dating to 20,000 years ago at Wallen Wallen Creek
- Numerous shell middens, stone artefacts, campsites, scarred trees, Bora Grounds, and burials containing ancestral remains are located across the Island.
- There are ancient pathways which Aboriginal People traversed from one side of the Island to the other. These pathways can still be traced and are known to Quandamooka People.
- Traditional knowledge regarding fauna and flora prevalent in the National Park are still managed and utilised today.
- Stories and cultural significant water places are present, maintained, celebrated, visited and protected by Quandamooka People, particularly Bummeria (Brown Lake) and Kaboora (Blue Lake).

Implementation stages

This Strategy is proposed to be implemented in the following stages:

Stage	Timeframe	Park increase
Short-term additions	6 months to 18 months	+22%
Medium-term additions	18 months to 5 years	+6%
Long-term additions	5 years+	<i>For further investigation</i>

Refer to Figure 1 (map) to view the existing protected area, and potential areas of expansion.

Short-term additions (6 months to 18 months)

- Short-term additions are proposed to increase national park by approximately 6,019 hectares (22 per cent) to a total of 19,894 hectares (74 per cent of the total island).
- These areas have largely been funded, surveyed and agreed between partners and stakeholders, and are currently being implemented as Indigenous joint management area.
- These areas have been identified by QYAC as having significant cultural and natural value to the Quandamooka People. This includes areas previously under the trusteeship of Seqwater, that have not been previously mined, or have been rehabilitated over some time and land remediation is complete or nearing completion in the near future.

Medium-term additions (18 months to 5 years)

- Medium-term additions are proposed to increase national park on the island a further 6 per cent or 1536 hectares to a total of 21,430 hectares (80 per cent of the total island).
- These areas have been tentatively identified, pending funding, and are subject to final agreement by partners and stakeholders.
- The areas have been identified as having high conservation significance and good connectivity to existing protected area estate on the island.

Long-term additions

- While it is anticipated that further areas will be suitable for addition to the protected area on the island, funding, consultation and agreement between partners and stakeholders, including QYAC, Sibelco, Seqwater, and lessees will be required prior to area identification.
- Potential areas are proposed to be largely made up from remaining mining tenure and Seqwater tenure surplus to operational requirements.
- These areas may be considered only after mining rehabilitation is well progressed and the area's natural and cultural values are re-established and Seqwater considers the future of water management and supply on Minjerribah.



Figure 1: Map of existing protected area and potential expansion on Minjerribah.

Note: this map is indicative only and does not identify all existing infrastructure, leases or other tenures. It identifies areas that have the potential for addition to the protected area on the island, subject to further detailed discussions with partners, stakeholders and land tenure holders.

