

# Protecting Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in the Paroo Shire



*Look down, look around  
– you're on sacred ground*

The Paroo Shire is a vast region that includes the townships of Cunnamulla, Eulo, Wyandra and Yowah.

Cunnamulla lies at the centre of the shire, which is the heart of Kunja Country. The word '*Cunnamulla*' means long stretch of water or big waterhole in the language of the Kunja people.



There are four traditional language groups in the region:  
Kunja [Kun-ya]  
Kooma [Coo-ma]  
Budjiti [Budge-it-ee]  
Mardigan [Mar-di-gan]

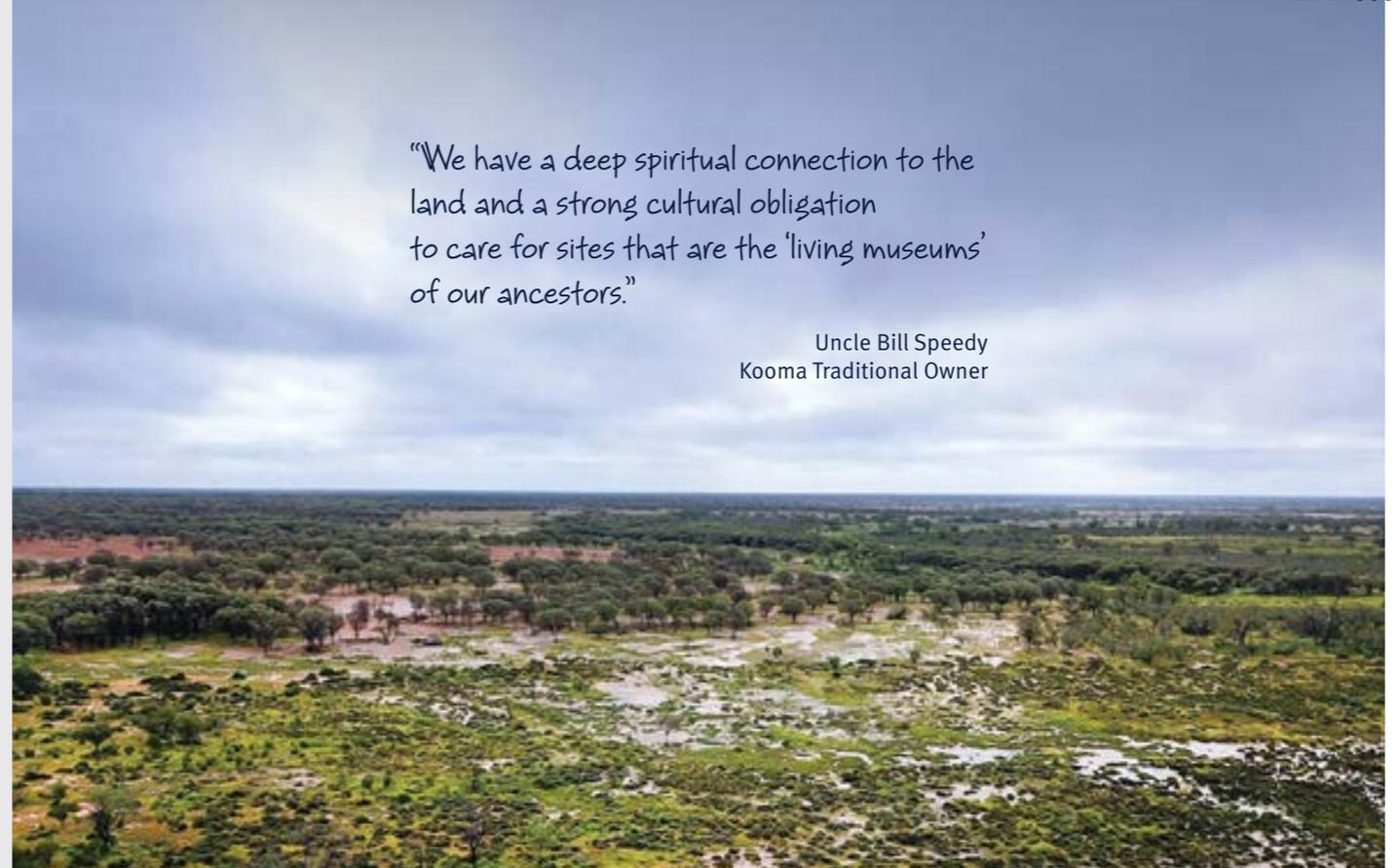
Over time, families from other language groups, such as Kullilli and Murrwarri, have settled in the region.

Most of the established families in the Paroo Shire strongly identify with these prominent language groups.

This booklet has been produced by the Queensland Police Service (QPS) with the assistance of Constable Laurie Bateman of Cunnamulla Police Station, Cunnamulla's community Elders, the HOPE Program (South West Hospital and Health Service) and the Cultural Heritage Unit (DSDSATSIP).

*"We have a deep spiritual connection to the land and a strong cultural obligation to care for sites that are the 'living museums' of our ancestors."*

Uncle Bill Speedy  
Kooma Traditional Owner





### Recognising cultural sites and artefacts

The Paroo Shire has a wealth of Aboriginal cultural heritage sites, artefacts and artwork, and is the resting place for First Nations peoples whose ancestral remains have been placed with care and ceremony.

Particular locations within the landscape – water holes and natural springs, caves, sand hills and rocky outcrops – are likely to harbour Aboriginal sites.



*Uncle Bill Speedy demonstrates how Aboriginal people removed tree bark, exposing the sapwood beneath*

### Some cultural heritage sites

- Ceremonial places such as bora rings and stone circles
- Scarred trees, where sections of bark have been removed to make canoes, containers or shields
- Burial sites, often found in caves, rock shelters, sand hills and trees
- Rock art including engravings, stencils and drawings
- Grinding grooves, used to grind seeds and sharpen stone tools, often found near a water source.

Many cultural sites have been found in the region and there are likely many more yet to be identified.



*Grinding grooves and stones were used for sharpening tools, and crushing seeds and ochre*



*Rock wells were constructed by Aboriginal people to catch rainwater*



*Applying kangaroo sinew to a hunting spear*



*Traditional stone tools*

### What to do if you find a cultural site or artefact

Please inform the Cultural Heritage Unit (DSDSATSIP), who will provide contact details of the appropriate Traditional Owners or tell you what you need to do in any of the following circumstances:

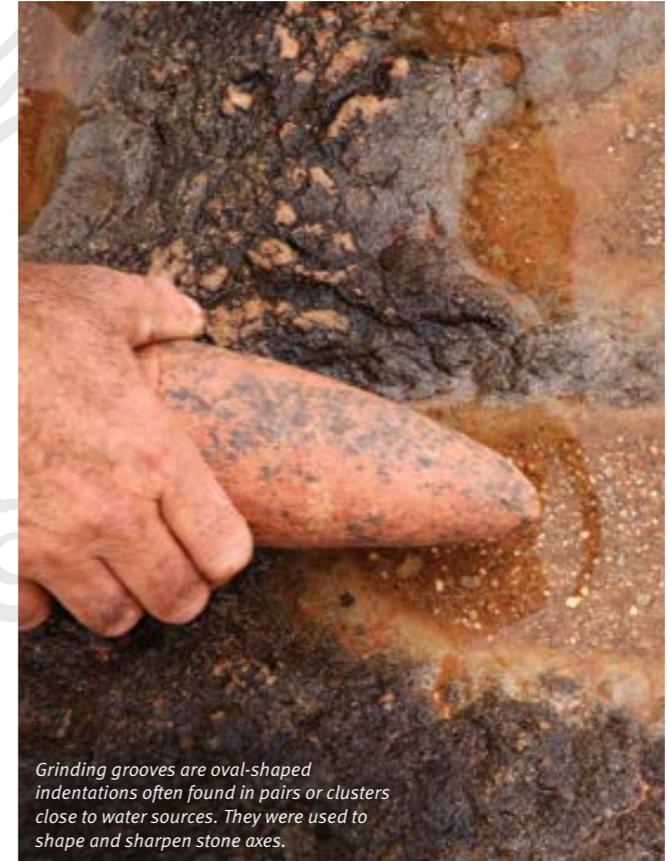
- If you think you've found an Aboriginal cultural heritage place or object on any public or private land.
- If you are given cultural material such as stone tools, spears or other cultural objects.
- If you are aware of cultural material being disturbed.
- If you want to excavate, clear land or carry out an activity that may harm a cultural site.

Contact details for DSDSATSIP can be found on the back page of this booklet.

### Do's and Don'ts

- Enjoy exploring the Paroo Shire's well-travelled paths that First Nations peoples have walked for thousands of years. But please remember to tread gently on our sacred ground.
- If you discover Aboriginal skeletal remains or remains that could be human, you must contact the Queensland Police Service. If the remains are established as pre-colonisation, the police will inform the Traditional Owners.\*
- Don't pick up or remove cultural material such as stone tools. Often where something was made or left by Aboriginal people thousands of years ago is as important as the artefact itself.
- Don't disturb cultural sites by walking or driving over them, and please leave scarred trees alone.
- When in doubt, ask. DSDSATSIP can direct you to the appropriate people and answer questions about Aboriginal heritage, sites and places.

\* Contact details for DSDSATSIP, local Traditional Owners and Cunnamulla Police are found on the back page of this booklet.



*Grinding grooves are oval-shaped indentations often found in pairs or clusters close to water sources. They were used to shape and sharpen stone axes.*



Native bush foods found within the Paroo Shire

## Legislation and lore

All Aboriginal objects and places, including sites on freehold land, have legal protection under the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Act 2003. The Act is administered by the Department of Seniors, Disabilities Services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Partnerships (DSDSATSIP), which has a series of fact sheets and duty of care guidelines to help people understand their obligations. Contact details are listed on the back page of this booklet.

The Queensland Police Service (QPS) understands that cultural heritage is a lived spirituality that shapes identity and is fundamental to the wellbeing of people and communities.

Aboriginal lore teaches that many of these sites were originally made by the ancestors, making them as old as there have been people on the Australian continent. Under Aboriginal lore and culture, there are consequences for breaking the obligation to care for Country.

## To find out more

### **DSDSATSIP Cultural Heritage Unit**

Phone 1300 378 401

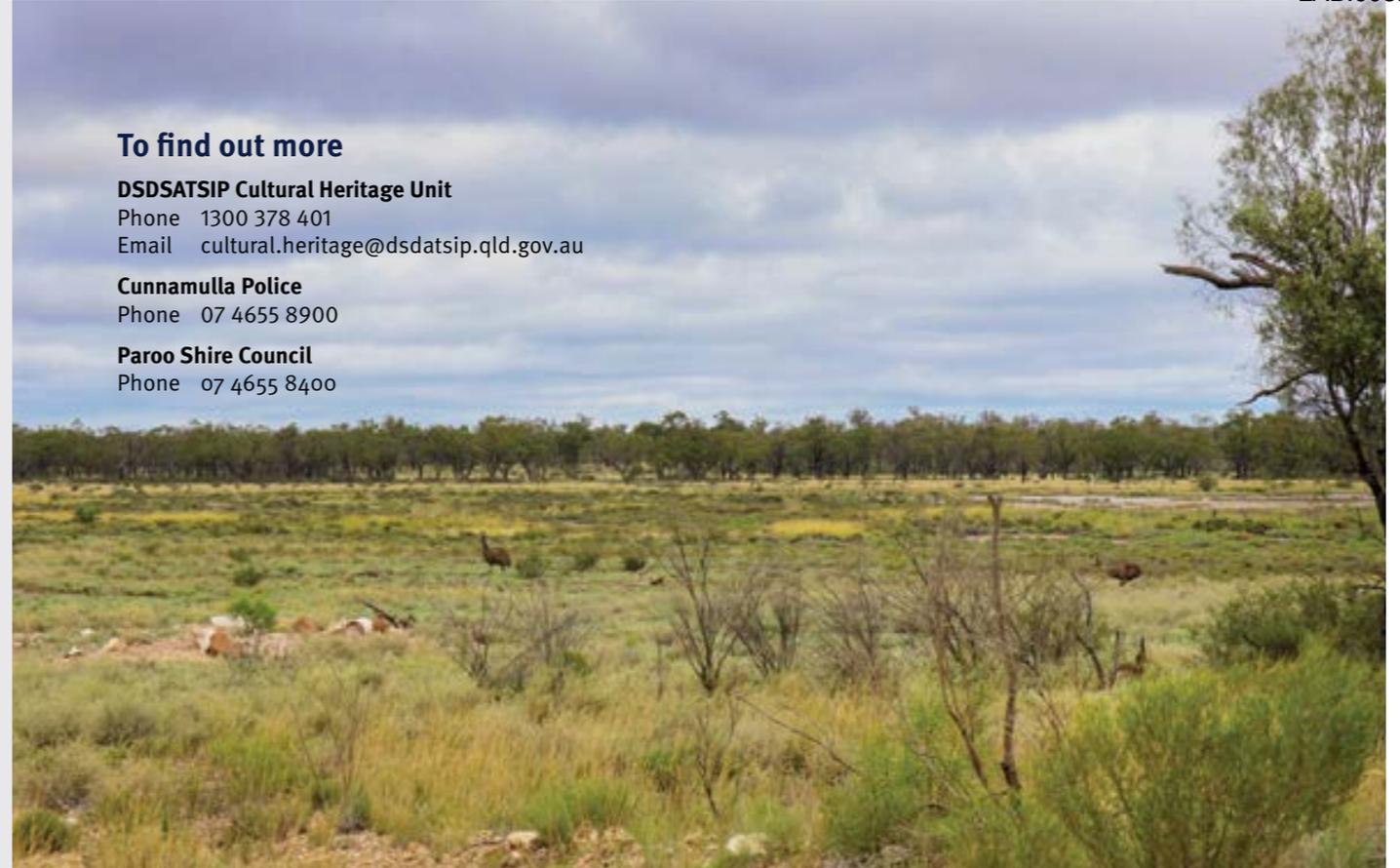
Email [cultural.heritage@dsdatsip.qld.gov.au](mailto:cultural.heritage@dsdatsip.qld.gov.au)

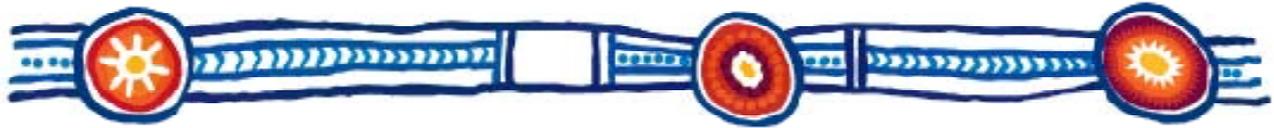
### **Cunnamulla Police**

Phone 07 4655 8900

### **Paroo Shire Council**

Phone 07 4655 8400





“Land is a central part of the connection to country and our identity as people. Many of our significant sites, landscapes, customs and stories focus on connection to land and are therefore very important to our culture, history and future.”

Kunja Traditional Owners

