

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

STATE PARTY

Australia

STATE, PROVINCE OR REGION

Victoria

NAME OF PROPERTY

Budj Bim Cultural Landscape

GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES TO THE NEAREST SECOND

S 38° 03' 44", E 141° 49' 58", being the centroid of Tae Rak (Lake Condah)

TEXTUAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BOUNDARIES OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY

The boundaries of the serial nominated property are those of Budj Bim National Park, Budj Bim Indigenous Protected Area, Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected Area and Lake Condah Mission.

MAPS OF THE NOMINATED PROPERTY, SHOWING BOUNDARIES

- ES.1 **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape:** Nominated property boundary (Annex C)
- ES.2 **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape:** Budj Bim (northern) component – nominated property boundary
- ES.3 **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape:** Kurtonitj (central) component – nominated property boundary
- ES.4 **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape:** Tyrendarra (southern) component – nominated property boundary

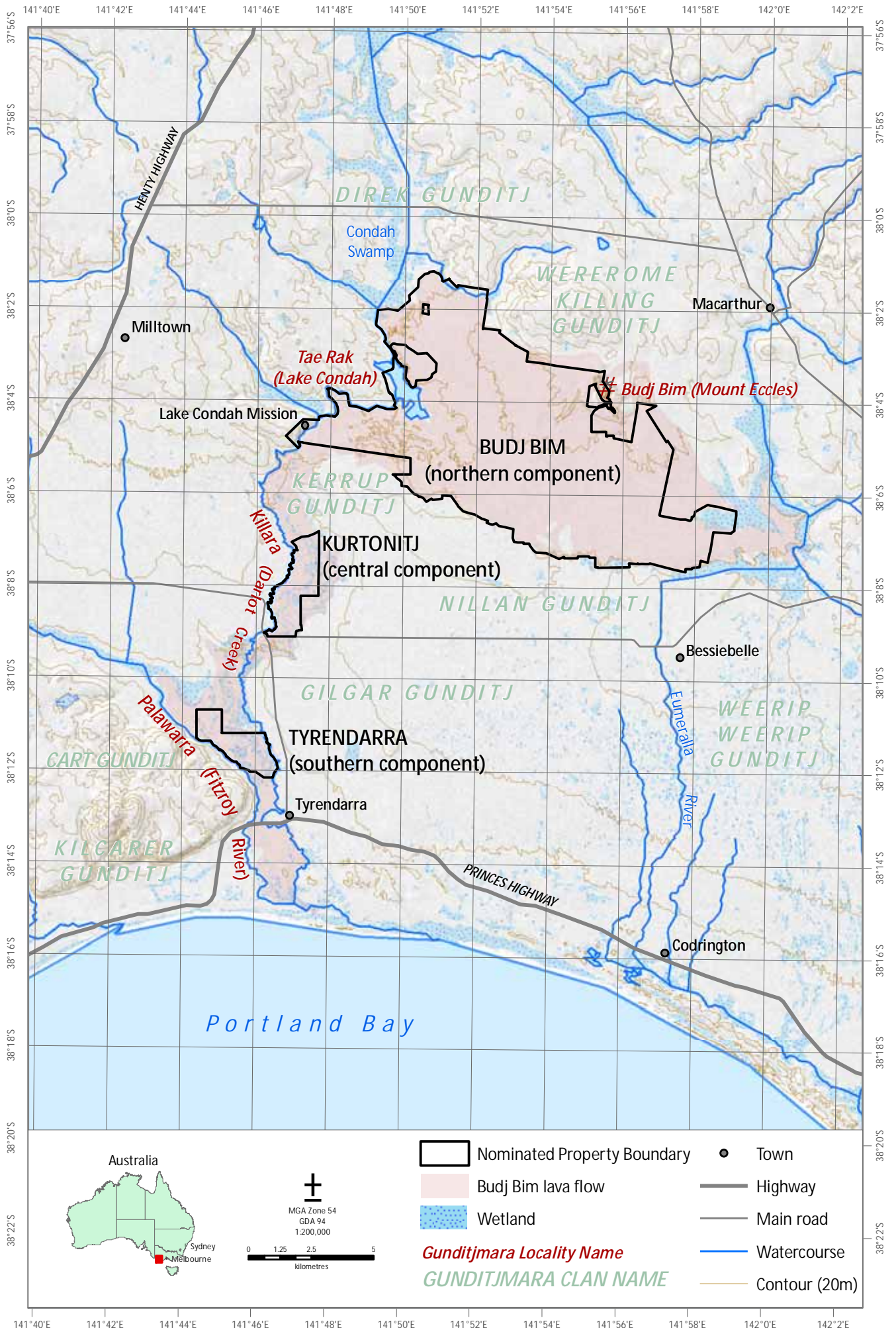
CRITERIA UNDER WHICH PROPERTY IS NOMINATED

Criterion (iii). *Bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilization which is living or which has disappeared.*

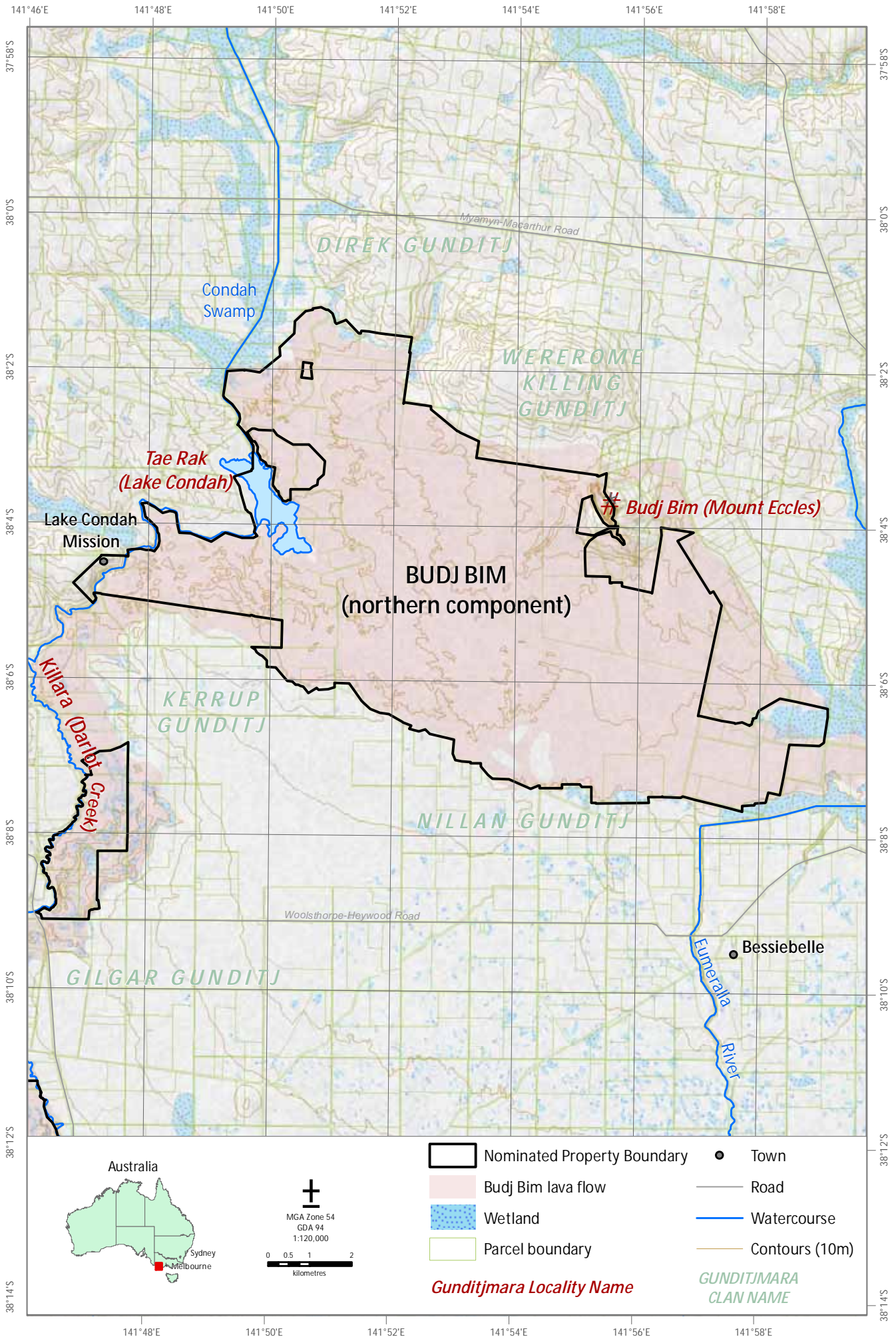
The **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** bears an exceptional testimony to the cultural traditions, knowledge, practices and ingenuity of the Gunditjmarra.

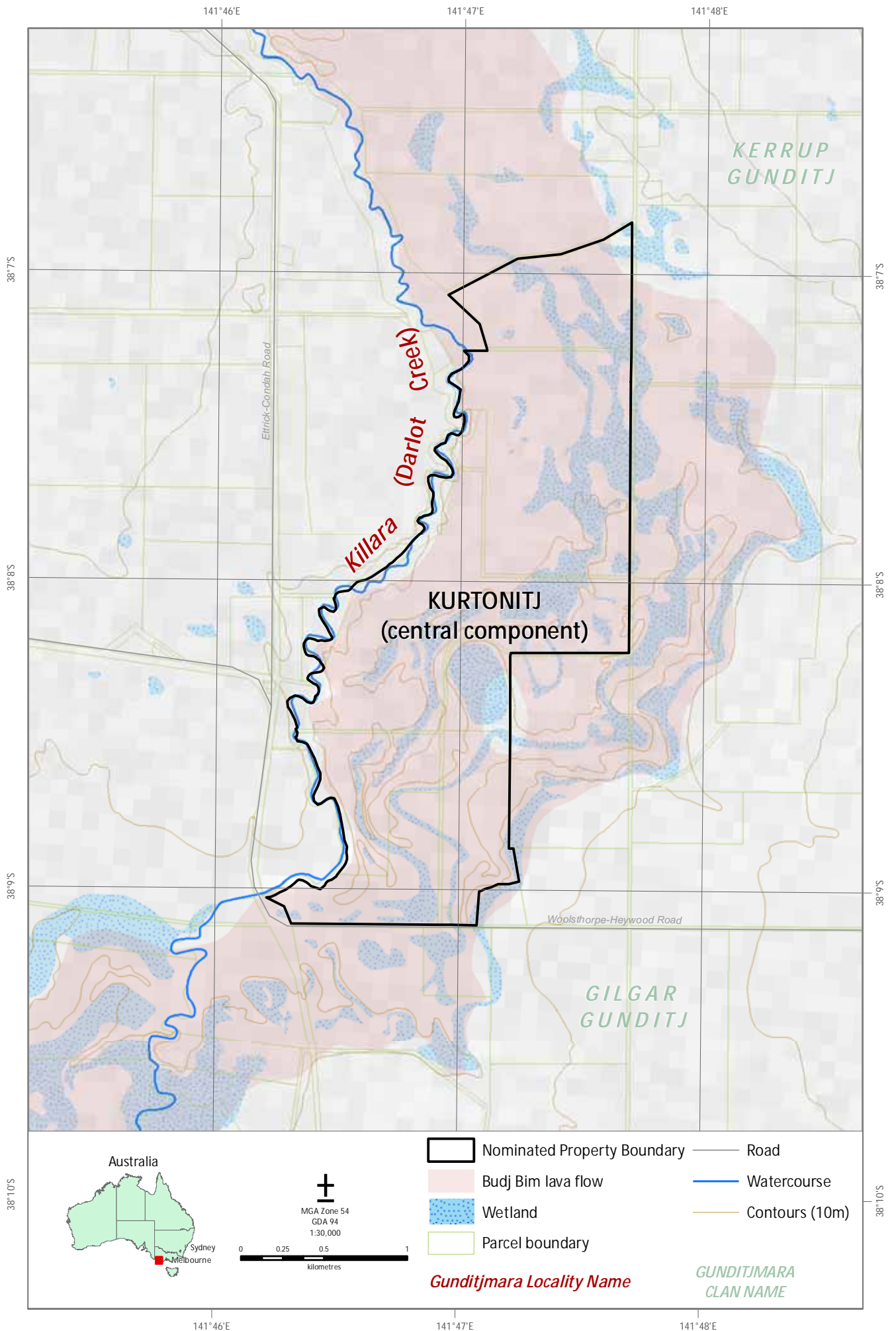
Criterion (v). *Be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change.*

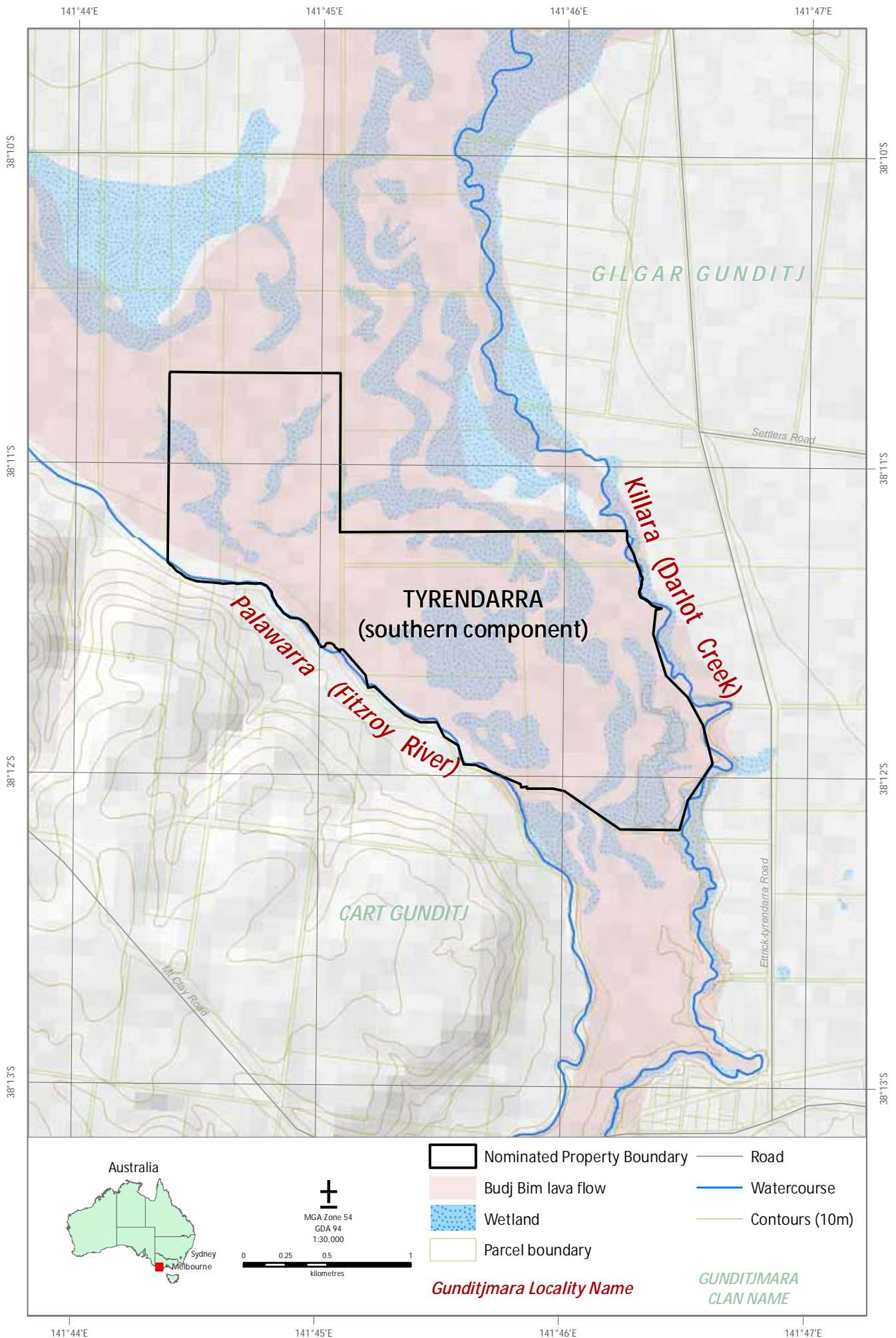
The continuing cultural landscape of the **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** is an outstanding representative example of human interaction with the environment and testimony to the lives of the Gunditjmarra.



ES.1 Budj Bim Cultural Landscape: Nominated property boundary (See Annex C for 1:30,000 version)







DRAFT STATEMENT OF OUTSTANDING UNIVERSAL VALUE

BRIEF SYNTHESIS

The **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** is located in the traditional Country of the Gunditjmara Aboriginal people in south-eastern Australia. The three serial components of the property contain one of the world's most extensive and oldest aquaculture systems. Over a period of at least 6,600 years the Gunditjmara created, manipulated and modified local hydrological regimes and ecological systems. They utilised the abundant local volcanic rock to construct channels, weirs and dams and manage water flows in order to systematically trap, store and harvest kooyang (short-finned eel – *Anguilla australis*) and support enhancement of other food resources. The highly productive aquaculture system provided a six millennia-long economic and social base for Gunditjmara society. This deep time interrelationship of Gunditjmara cultural and environmental systems is documented through present-day Gunditjmara cultural knowledge, practices, material culture, scientific research and historical documents. It is evidenced in the aquaculture system itself and in the inter-related geological, hydrological and ecological systems.

JUSTIFICATION FOR CRITERIA

Criterion (iii): *The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape bears an exceptional testimony to the cultural traditions, knowledge, practices and ingenuity of the Gunditjmara.*

The extensive networks and antiquity of the constructed and modified aquaculture system of the **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** bears testimony to the Gunditjmara as engineers and kooyang fishers. For at least the past 6,600 years the Gunditjmara created and adapted a system of aquaculture based on deliberate manipulation, modification and management of wetlands and waterways. Gunditjmara knowledge and practices have endured and continue to be passed down through their Elders and are recognisable across the wetlands of the **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** in the form of ancient and elaborate systems of stone-walled kooyang husbandry (or aquaculture) facilities. Gunditjmara cultural traditions, including associated storytelling, dance and basket weaving, continue to be maintained by their collective multigenerational knowledge.

Criterion (v): *The continuing cultural landscape of the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape is an outstanding representative example of human interaction with the environment and testimony to the lives of the Gunditjmara.*

The **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** was created by the Gunditjmara who purposefully harnessed the productive potential of the patchwork of wetlands on the Budj Bim lava flow. They achieved this by creating, modifying and maintaining an extensive hydrological engineering system that manipulated water flow in order to trap, store and harvest kooyang that migrate seasonally through the system. The key

elements of this system are the interconnected clusters of constructed and modified water channels, weirs, dams, ponds and sinkholes in combination with the lava flow, water flow and ecology and life-cycle of kooyang. The **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** exemplifies the dynamic ecological-cultural relationships evidenced in the Gunditjmara's deliberate manipulation and management of the environment.

STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

The **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** has a high level of integrity. The serial property incorporates intact and outstanding examples of aquaculture complexes at Tae Rak (Lake Condah), Tyrendarra and Kurtonitj. Each complex includes all the physical elements of the system (that is, channels, weirs, dams and ponds) that demonstrate the operation of Gunditjmara aquaculture. The property also includes Budj Bim, a Gunditjmara Ancestral Being and volcano that is the source of the lava flow on which the aquaculture system is constructed. The 9,935-hectare property is sufficient in size to incorporate the cultural features and ecological processes that illustrate the ways multiple systems – social, spiritual, geological, hydrological and ecological – interact and function. The reinstatement of traditional water flows into Tae Rak through the construction of a cultural weir in 2010, following extensive draining of the lake in the 1950s, has returned and enhanced the water flow across the aquaculture system. This restoration, the rugged environment, the use of stone, the relatively intact vegetation and the lack of major development within the **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** mean that the extensive aquaculture system has survived, is in good condition and can be readily identified in the landscape.

STATEMENT OF AUTHENTICITY

The **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** has a high degree of authenticity. Gunditjmara traditional knowledge is demonstrated by millennia of oral transmission, through continuity of practice and is supported by documented Gunditjmara cultural traditions and exceptionally well-preserved archaeological, environmental and historical evidence. The authenticity of the **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** is evident in the continuing connection of the Gunditjmara to their landscape and their traditional and historical knowledge of the life cycle of kooyang. Authenticity is also evident in the practices associated with the trapping, storage and harvesting of kooyang; including the construction of stone weirs and weaving of fibre baskets. In 2007, the Australian Federal Court recognised the native title rights of the Gunditjmara for their “strong and unrelenting connection to this area where their ancestors farmed eels for food and trade, at the time of European settlement and back through millennia.”

REQUIREMENTS FOR PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT

All of the **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** is Aboriginal-owned and/or managed and is managed to respect the customary and legal rights and obligations of the Gunditjmara Traditional Owners. The nominated property is protected and managed through an adaptive and participatory management framework of overlapping and integrated customary, governance, legislative and policy approaches.

The Gunditjmara Traditional Owners apply customary knowledge and scientific approaches through two management regimes; a co-operative arrangement with the Victorian Government for Budj Bim National Park; and Indigenous ownership of the Budj Bim and Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected Areas. The **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** management system is established through the 2015 *Ngootyoong Gunditj, Ngootyoong Mara South West Management Plan*. A team of Budj Bim Rangers, funded through the Australian Government's Indigenous Advancement Strategy program, manage, conserve and protect the heritage values of the nominated property in accordance with property management plans.

The majority of the **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** is included on Australia's National Heritage List, and is protected by the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*. Once included on the World Heritage List, the entire property will be recognised as a 'Matter of National Environmental Significance' and protected by the Act. All Gunditjmara cultural heritage on **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape** is protected by Victoria's *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

There are no major threats to either the aquaculture system or to the maintenance of associated Gunditjmara cultural traditions, knowledge and practices. Nevertheless there are pressures on the nominated property associated with pest plants and animals, water flow and quality, sustaining kooyang populations, unauthorised access of cattle and regrowth of trees within some aquaculture features. The restoration of Tae Rak in 2010 has contributed to maintaining and rejuvenating water flows through the aquaculture system; thereby ensured the ongoing viability of living Gunditjmara cultural traditions and practices.

The 2014 *Budj Bim (Tourism) Master Plan* establishes requirements for sustainable tourism and visitation, as well as educational opportunities, for the **Budj Bim Cultural Landscape**.

NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION OF OFFICIAL LOCAL INSTITUTIONAL AGENCY

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