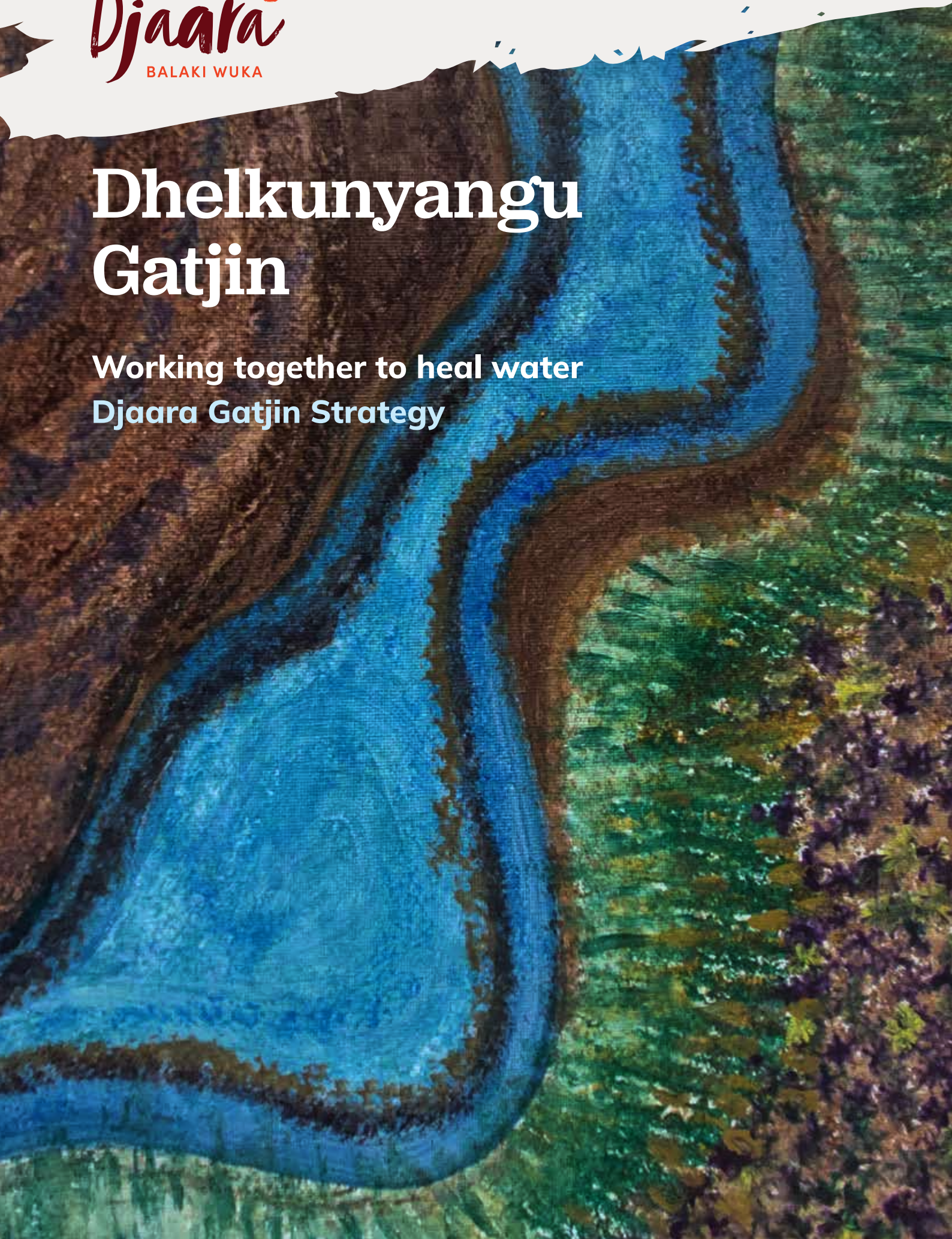




# Dhelkunyangu Gatjin

Working together to heal water  
Djaara Gatjin Strategy



*‘Gatjin is life, it is a living entity in itself and all life depends on the free flow of water throughout Country. We are nurtured by and born of water - we are gatjin’*

*Water is Life, Djaara Nation Statement*

## **Right water in the right place at the right time.**

**Djaara have cultural rights associated with the gatjin (water) that falls on and flows across Djandak (Djaara country). We have an inherent connection to our ancestors, and we will follow in their footsteps to care for gatjin.**

**Dhelkunyangu Gatjin is Djaara’s strategy, prescribing how we expect gatjin to be cared for on Djandak. Gatjin is an integral, living part of Djandak and indeed a living part of us.**

Our gatjin has been stolen.

Colonial infrastructure and land use has displaced our People and our traditional management of gatjin and irreparably damaged our Country. We are excluded and do not benefit from the water economy.

Consequently, our Country is sick. Our waterways are sick. We are sick and we are culturally and financially poorer.

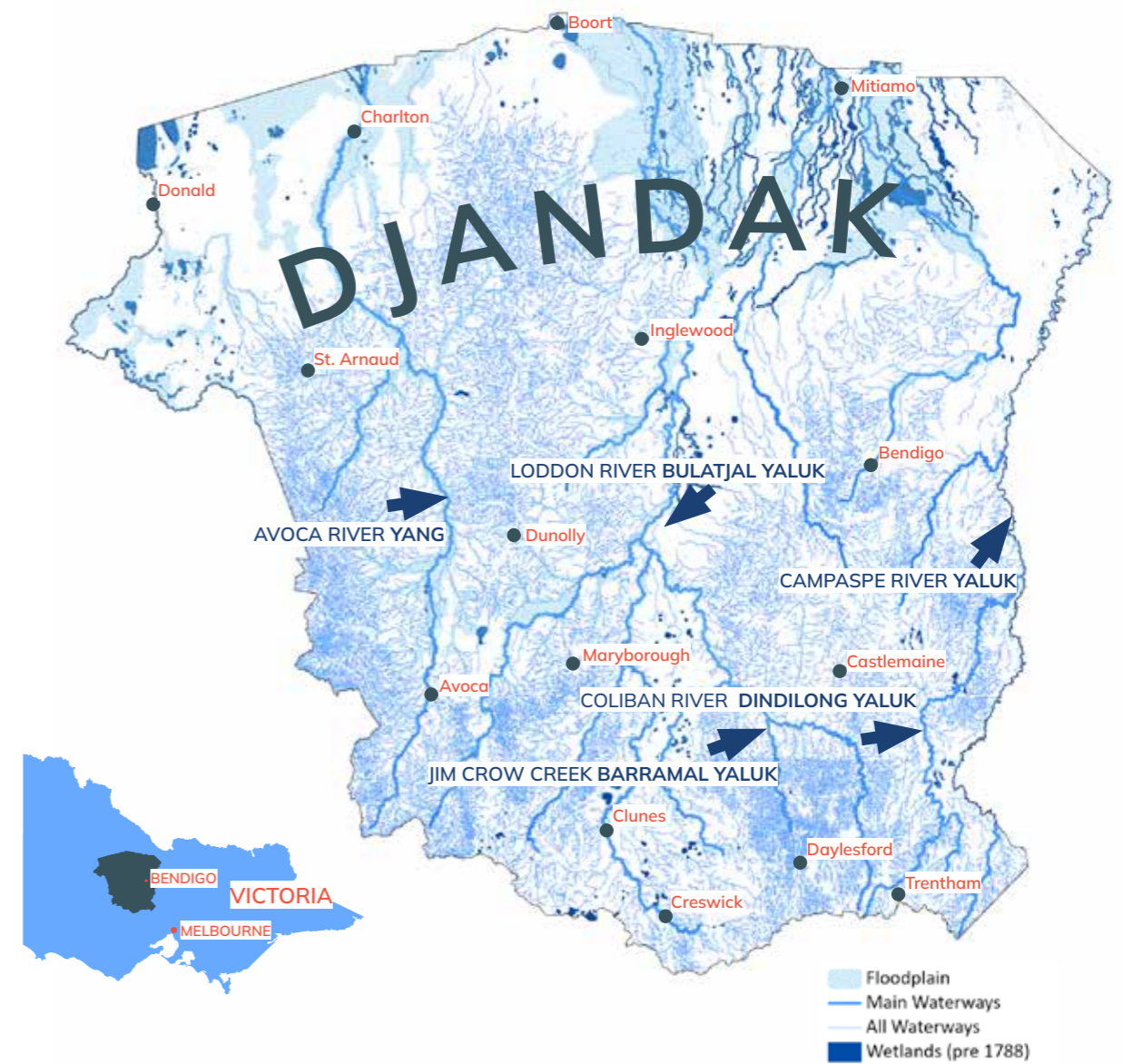
The State, in the 2013 Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA), acknowledged we are the Traditional Owners of Djandak and committed to include us in the management of natural resources. Yet we are still excluded from the management of water and do not benefit from the water economy.

Dhelkunyangu Gatjin aims to mobilise Djaara’s rights to gatjin under the RSA and support the delivery of the Dhelkunya Dja Country plan, in particular Goal 5: Rivers and Waterways.



*Each place on our Country is known and valued, has a name and a song, and this is embedded in our landscape along with murrups (spirits) imprinted on the water, birds, plants, animals, rocks, mountains and ancestral spirits. We continue to perform ceremonies to honour each of the spirits and our traditional rites, our Welcome to Country being one example.*

**Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan**



## Our Djandak, Our Gatjin

### GATJIN IS THE LIFEBLOOD OF OUR COUNTRY

As gatjin moves through Djandak: seeping into our soils, entering our groundwater, flowing down our waterways, and pooling in our wetlands, it shapes and nourishes our landscape. It is integral to the health of our People and our Country.

Our involvement in water management is fundamental. It enables us to live our Culture and follow in the footsteps of our Ancestors to **dhelkunya** (care) for Djandak. It also allows us to apply and share our knowledge to help heal our water systems for the benefit of all.

# Infrastructure and water extraction on Country

## IMPACT OF COLONISATION

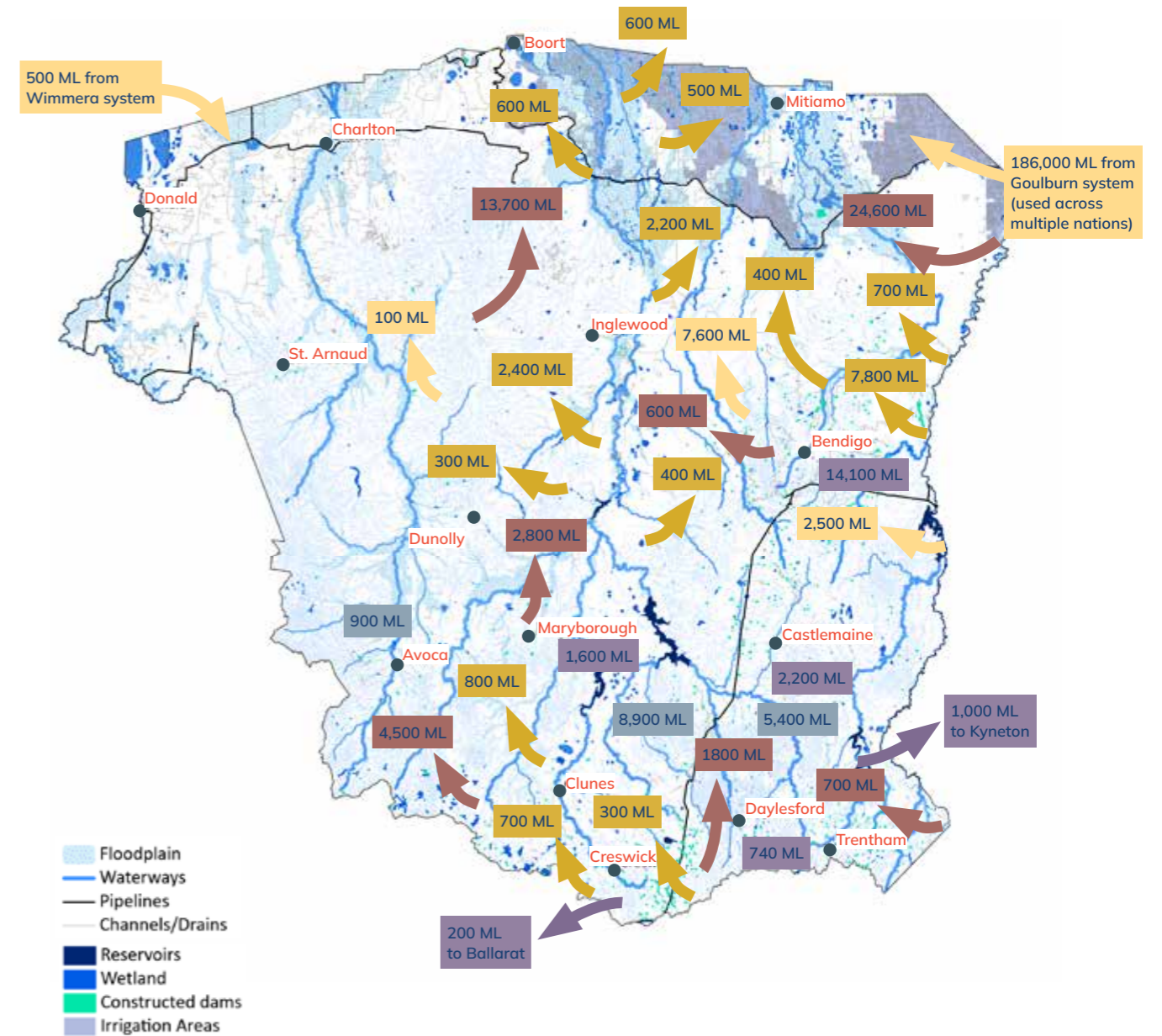
Colonisation and dispossession has resulted in immense changes to how water is managed.

Water has been captured in dams, waterways realigned, wetlands destroyed, conveyance channels constructed, river flows turned upside down, and groundwater systems exploited.

This has altered our landscape and degraded our natural resources that depended on and were sustained by hydrological cycles and water systems.

A water economy has evolved that is worth billions of dollars annually, produces food and fibre for Australia and the world, provides drinking water and underpins local and regional communities. This water system is governed by the State resulting in water on Djandak — Djaara's water — being fully allocated to water users.

Djaara are excluded from participating and benefiting in these water arrangements. Djaara knowledge is not central to informing sustainable water management. Djaara currently own very little water resources and have very little say on how the water is managed on Djandak.



WATER USE ON DJANDAK	Volume - Mega litres (ML)
Private dam use	15,250 ML
Town water use	22,190 ML
Irrigation from rivers	22,330 ML
Irrigation from groundwater	48,700 ML
Irrigation from reservoirs/channels (irrigation districts)	196,700 ML
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>305,170ML</b>

\*figures are approximate and based on averages over the past 10 years. Only major usage shown on map



## Djaara's vision for gatjin

**'djaa ba gatjin dhelkunyangu, dhelk gatjini djuwenuwangu'**

*We are empowered as the Traditional custodians of this land to care for Country and apply Djaara knowledge to heal our waterways - returning good spirit to gatjin.*

To exercise our rights, authority, and apply Djaara Lore to care for gatjin, we will achieve the following outcomes:

### **MAKE DECISIONS FOR GATJIN**

This will place consideration of Djaara Culture and Lore at the heart of water management decisions and enable us to care for Country.

### **SECURE A GROWING SHARE OF WATER RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS**

This is some restitution of our stolen water rights and enables us to determine the best use of our water for cultural purposes. It also allows us to be directly involved in the water economy.

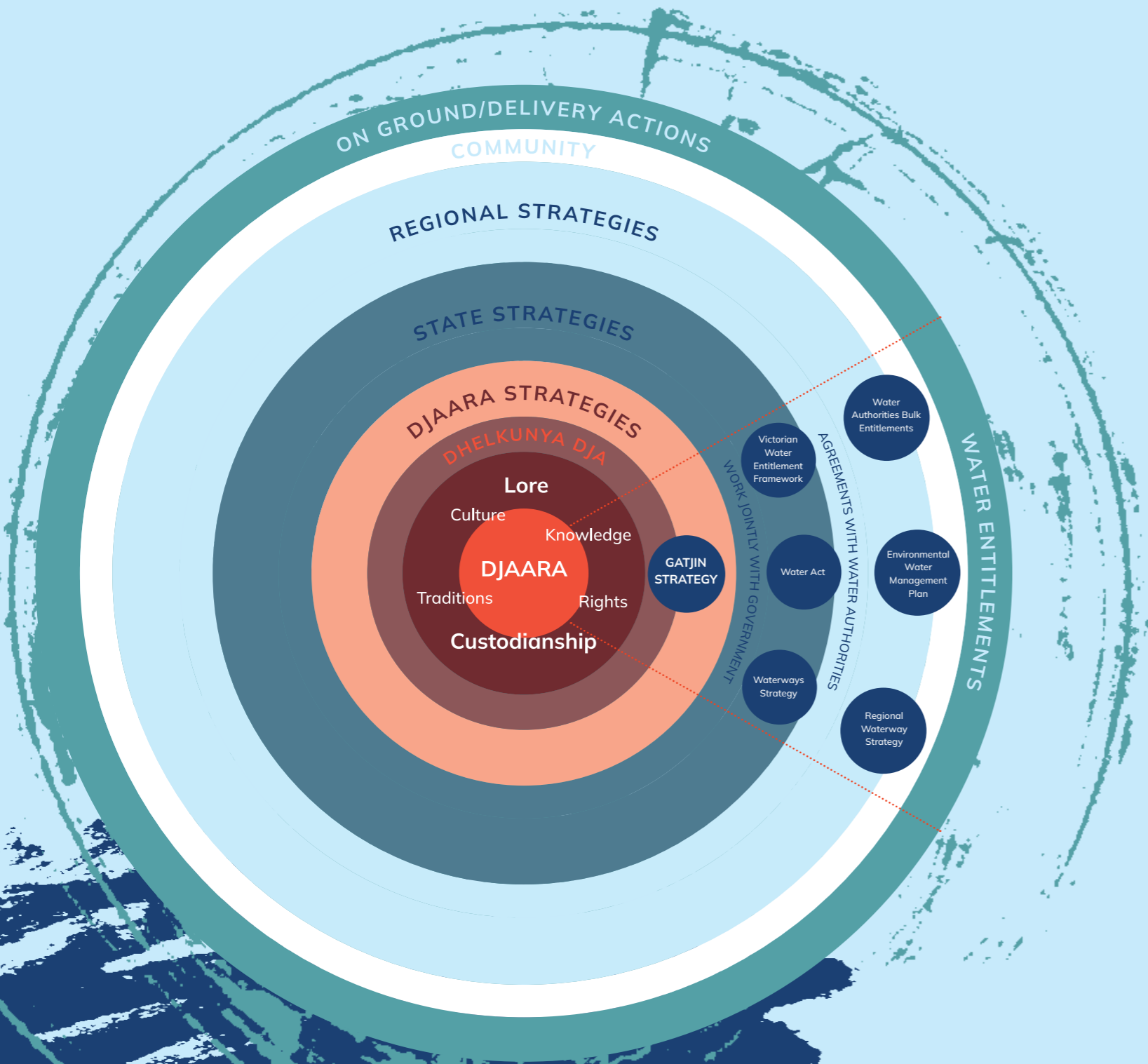
### **A DJAARA GATJIN AUTHORITY**

This will be established to manage our water rights and entitlements and oversee water management decisions.



Just as waterways create a baring (pathway) for us to journey on country. We have mapped out the baring that will lead us to our destination where Djaara lore and knowledge becomes central to water management for the benefit of all.

A Djaara centred approach is fundamental to achieving the vision and will require appropriate resourcing and investment in the training and employment of Djaara. Each baring has a set of **djimbunang** (right way) indicators for us to monitor to ensure we remain on track.



## We make decisions for gatjin

To meet our obligations to heal and manage Djandak and enjoy our traditional rights, Djaara Culture and Lore must be at the heart of water policy, planning and management.

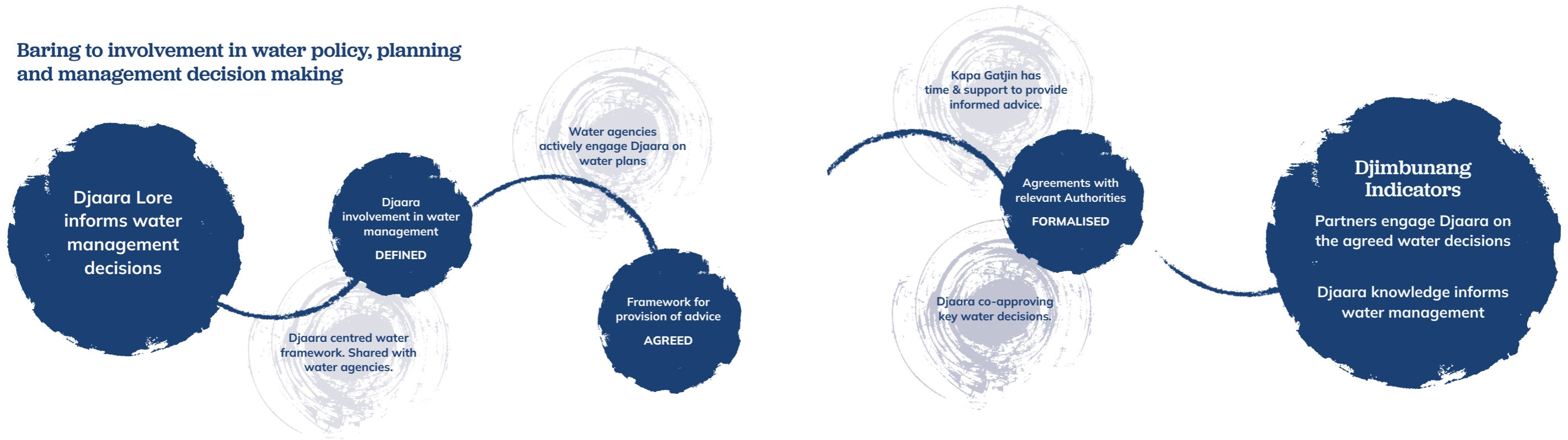
Water authorities are required under the RSA to engage with Djaara on the management of water. We will work in ngaldurrong (altogether) with them to establish genuine processes for Djaara's involvement on how water is managed on Djandak. We will also work in ngaldurrong with neighbouring mobs, Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) and Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC) for water management that's crosses Nation's boundaries. In time, we will become the sole manager of environmental water and waterways on Djandak.

Placing Djaara at the centre, as demonstrated through the Djaara Centred Water Management Framework is fundamental to incorporate Djaara Lore and traditional knowledge into decision making. The current State centred planning and management approach does not allow this, it keeps Traditional Owners on the outside, to be engaged as a stakeholder, rather than as a rights holder.

This framework forms an essential component to progress the baring for Djaara to make decisions for gatjin.

# Baring (pathways) to Djaara making decisions for gatjin

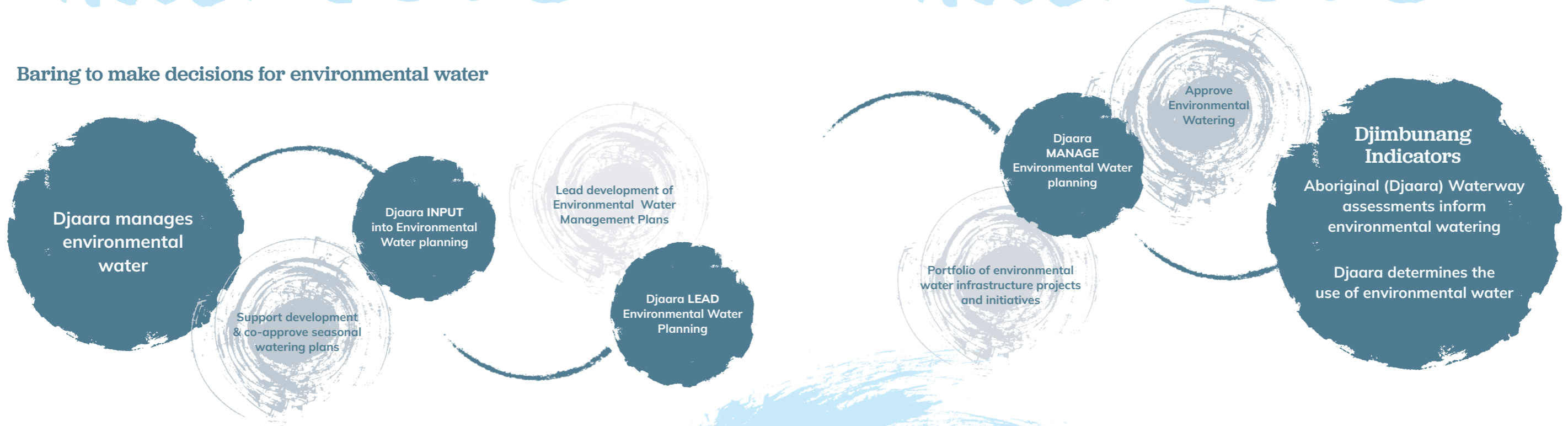
## Baring to involvement in water policy, planning and management decision making



A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF ABORIGINAL (DJAARA) WATERWAYS ASSESSMENTS (AWA) IS CRITICAL FOR ALL BARING

PROVISION OF TECHNICAL & CULTURAL ADVICE WHERE OTHERS MAKE DECISIONS

## Baring to make decisions for environmental water





## Secure a growing share in water rights & entitlements

**We require a growing share of the available water entitlements to address the dispossession of our water rights and to allow us to care for gatjin.**

In consultation with MLDRIN and the State of Victoria we will work to define a cultural water right which will include entitlement to be used to meet cultural flows. The right will also regulate water management to protect culturally important water flows such as minimum flows, passing flows, flood flows and flow paths.

We will secure entitlements through purchases, donations and savings. But in an overallocated system this will not be sufficient to address our dispossession and the exclusion from the water economy.

To secure a growing share of water entitlements requires a mechanism to redistribute existing entitlements, such as the reallocation of a percentage of all water trades, either as water or financial payments.

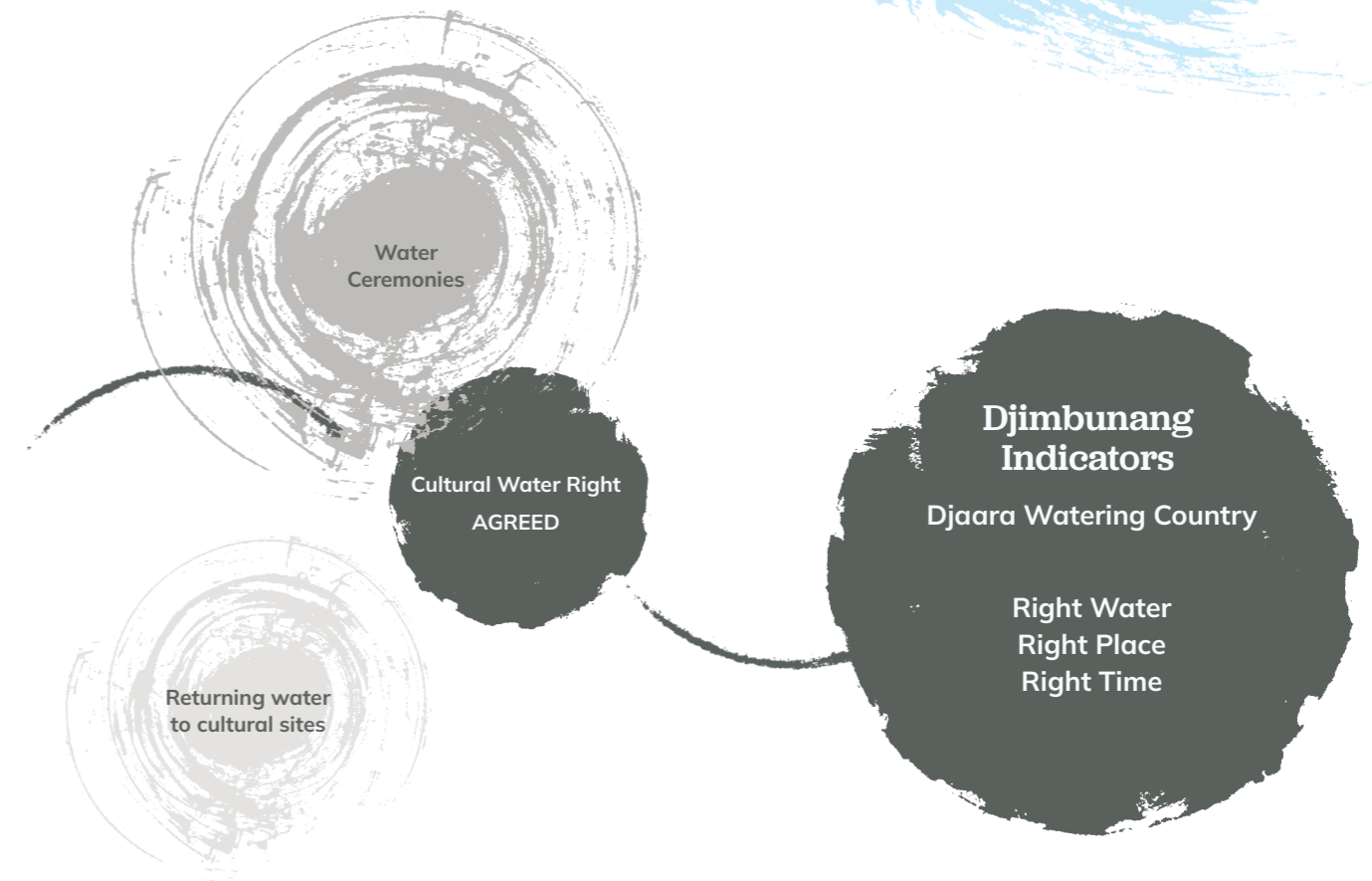
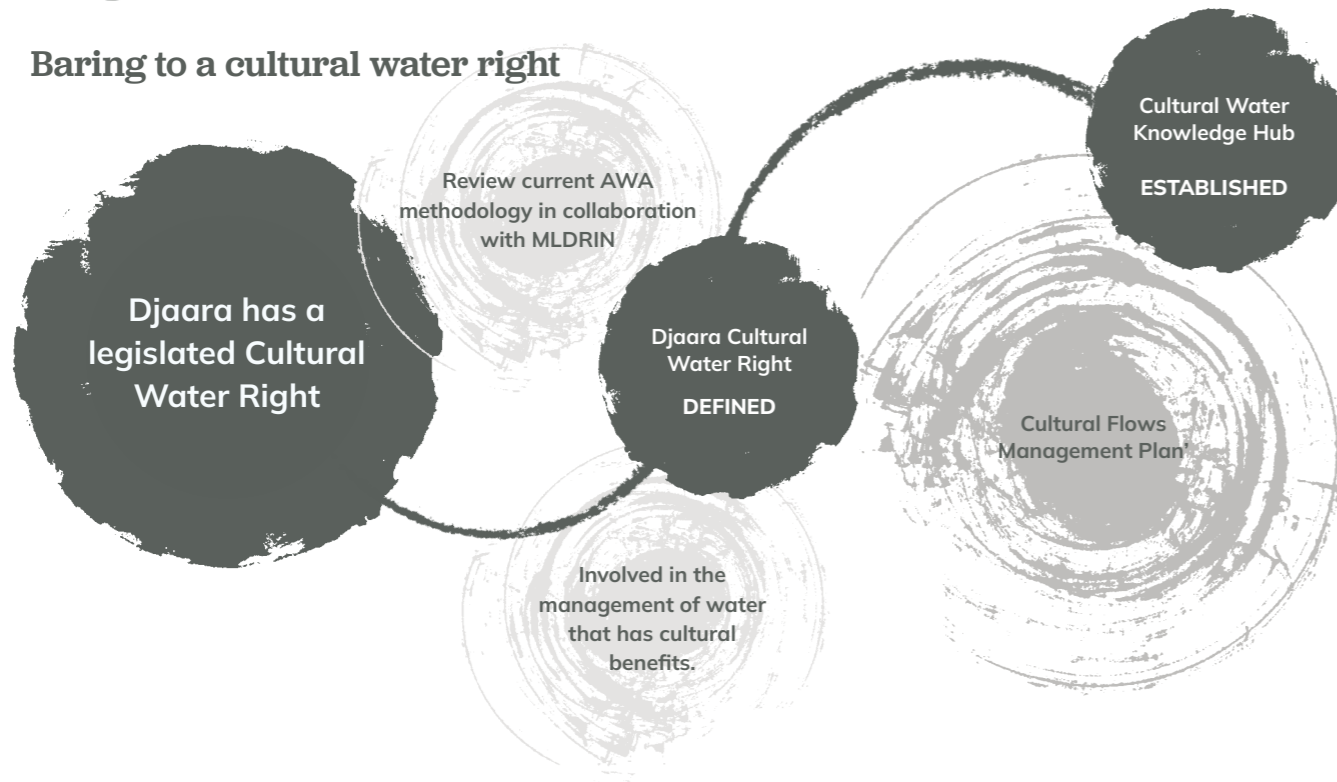
Djaara economic development opportunities through the use of water will be pursued, where they support environmental or cultural outcomes.





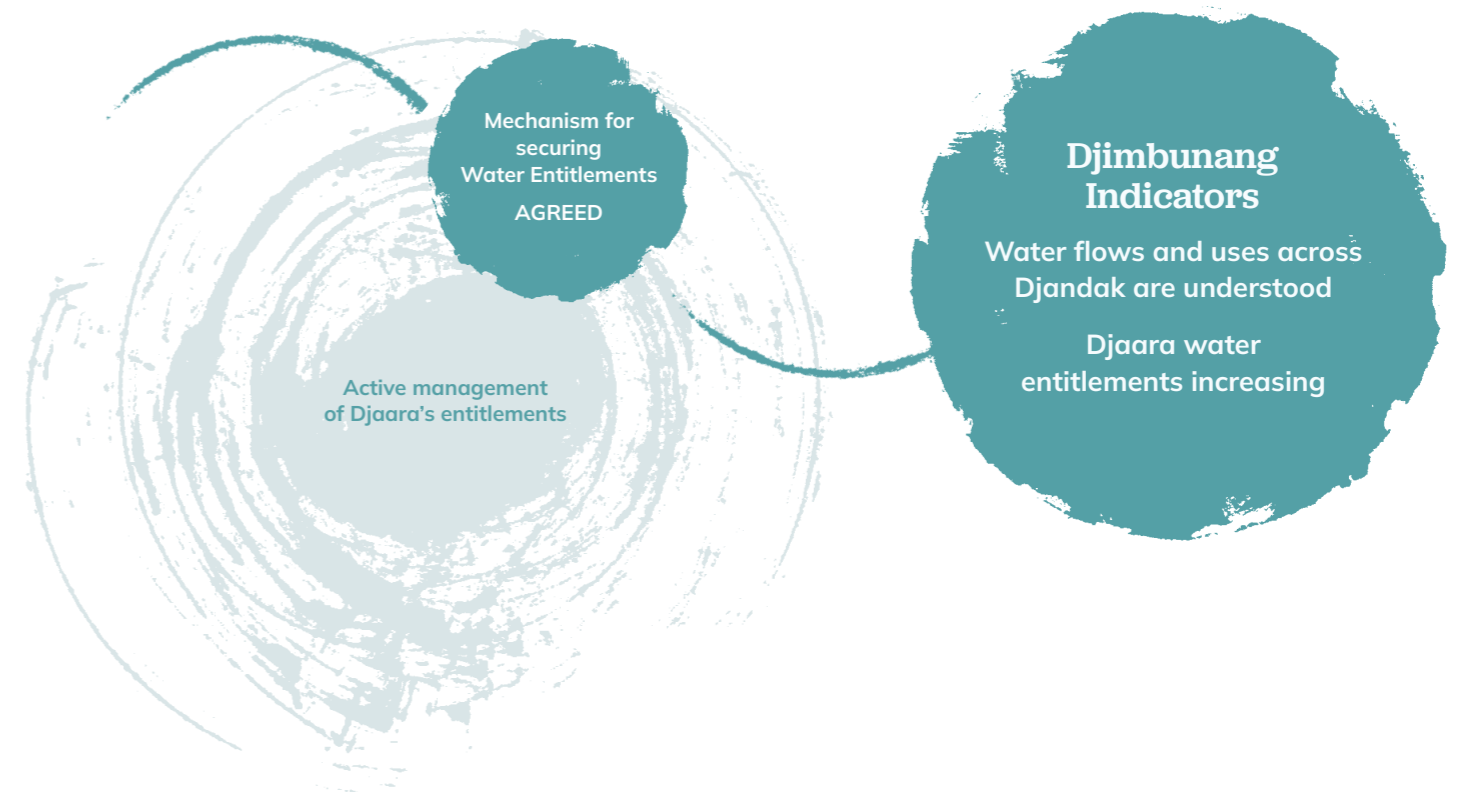
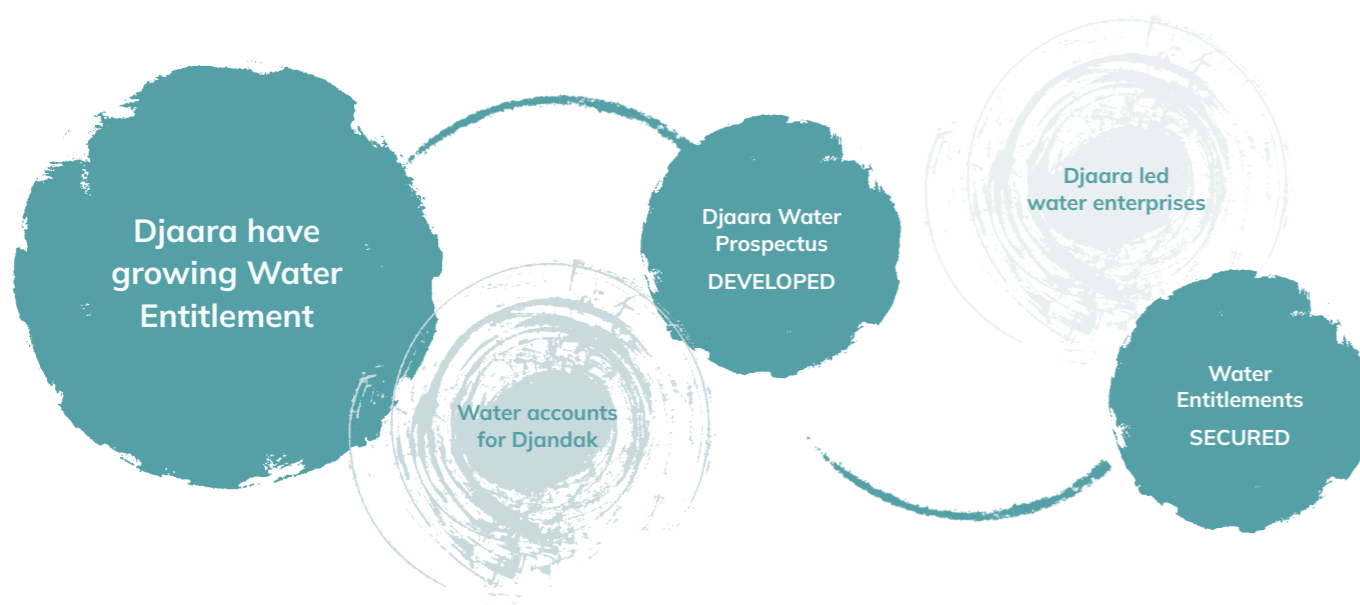
# Baring (pathways) to secure water rights and entitlements

## Baring to a cultural water right



A COMPREHENSIVE PROGRAM OF ABORIGINAL (DJAARA) WATERWAYS ASSESSMENTS IS CRITICAL FOR ALL BARING

## Baring to owning a growing water entitlement



# Establish the Djaara Gatjin Authority

A Djaara water authority is required to manage our water and water interests. We acknowledge the authority that neighbouring mobs also have for water on their country.

The Djaara Gatjin Authority will authorise water decisions on Djandak and manage Djaara water rights and entitlements.

The Authority will be a knowledge hub: curating and building technical capability and expertise and deciding how and where water will be used on Djandak.

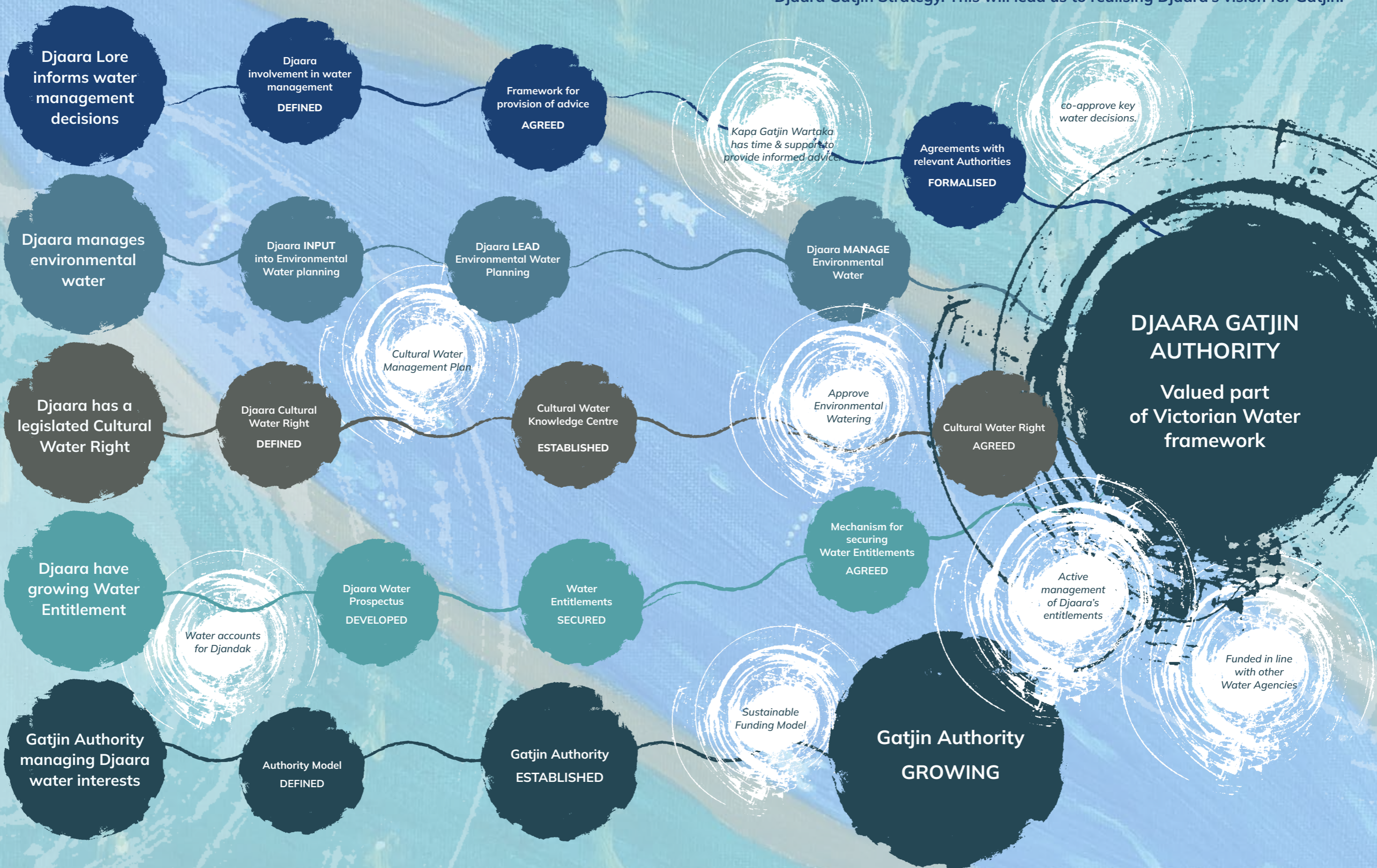
Just like other authorities it will need appropriate resourcing with an ongoing sustainable funding mechanism. The Authority will employ and train Djaara to become future water sector leaders.

# Baring to establish the Djaara Gatjin Authority



# Dhelkunyangu Gatjin

Just as all waterways eventually meet and become one; the baring outlined in this strategy all converge to create Dhelkunyangu Gatjin — Djaara Gatjin Strategy. This will lead us to realising Djaara’s vision for Gatjin.



# Destination

**It will be all right in the end - If it is not all right, it is not the end**

Dhelkunyangu Gatjin outlines the baring we need to journey on to address our dispossession of water and heal the damage that our exclusion from water management has done to our People and Country.

This strategy reflects a whole of Djandak approach which empowers the Djaara ways of old. It acknowledges our traditional rights and incorporates Djaara Lore and knowledge into the current water management frameworks. This will enable us to heal our People and our Country for the benefit of all. It also allows us to participate in and benefit from the water economy. It contributes to our journey towards restorative justice with the state of Victoria.

To commence this strategy we will work with the water sector to develop and co-deliver an implementation plan.

To bring about this transformational change to how water is managed on Djandak, just like all water agencies, we need appropriate resources with an ongoing sustainable funding mechanism to enable Djaara to manage gatjin.

We invite our fellow water agencies and the community to walk in ngaldurrong with good **murrup** (spirit) with us on this journey to heal gatjin.

## Acknowledgment of artists

Front cover: Aunty Marilyn Nicolls  
Page 20/21: Aunty Vicki Murray  
Back cover: Aunty Kathy Nicolls





# Djaara

BALAKI WUKA

Kapa Gatjin wartaka, a long established Djaara water knowledge group provide cultural guidance and knowledge on water management and custodianship. Kapa Gatjin have been instrumental in developing the Strategy, establishing the Vision and outcomes and priorities for implementation.

We acknowledge the Kapa Gatjin wartaka members for their guidance and thank all Djaara members, the project team and staff across the Dja Dja Wurrung Group for their contribution to the development of the Strategy.

We also thank the Dja Dja Wurrung Group executive management team and Boards for their ongoing support and guidance.

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