



# 2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October

Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

**Nominee: Garguree Swampcare, NSW**

**Category: Rio Tinto Indigenous Land Management Award**

The ecological journey from a Blue Mountains car racing track of the 1950s to a place of natural beauty has been the passion of the Swampcare Caring for Country Group in The Gully at Katoomba, Blue Mountains NSW. The Gully, or Garguree, was an Aboriginal settlement of the Gundungarra and Darug people. In the 1950s, residents were evicted in to make way for a car racing track which closed in 1970. It was subsequently used as a single car circuit until the mid-1990s, after which it was officially recognised as an Aboriginal place in 2002. It has now been beautified and maintained by a dedicated group of volunteers who meet monthly to plant natives and weed out invasive species of plants.

Garguree Swampcare is open to all the community, and the group's journey to bring regeneration and re-connection to this beautiful site has been a labour of love for many people. With the recognition of The Gully as an Aboriginal place in 2002, a joint management initiative began between The Gully Traditional Owners and the Blue Mountains City Council (BMCC). In 2012, Garguree Swampcare was born. This addressed the desire and need to redress the environmental and community impact of past events in a cultural way by Connecting to Country, identifying the need to repair the core swamp system caused by the stands of large willows and other woody weeds, and to encourage the spread of water flow back through the swamp to rehydrate the natural system.

To achieve this required; the removal of the willows and woody weeds, laying coir logs and dead willow debris, replanting native upper mountain swamp species and implementing a thorough and ongoing program including both seasonal and individually-targeted weed sweeps, follow up planting, seed collection, and the laying of brush matting.

Through a deep understanding and willingness to share and work together, the Group has achieved incredible environmental and cultural healing. Garguree is a large group, with many children involved. For the past three years, children from Garguree have been the recipients of the Junior Bushcare Award with BMCC for their ongoing commitment and connection. Many of these children have grown up with the Garguree Group and are doing so with a true respect for the Aboriginal community, knowledge of the natural world, regeneration and revegetation techniques and understanding the importance of protecting Country and community.

The group coordinators won the BMCC Bushcare Legends award three years ago. BMCC mayor Mark Greenhill said, "This award is the highest level of recognition we can give anyone within the Bushcare Program. It recognises sustained efforts over many years."

Cultural knowledge is freely passed on through The Gully traditional owners and their descendants. They come to Garguree to heal Country and, in turn, they also help to heal the young and old in the community through the stories of traditional life in the Gully.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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Garguree has an open group policy that is widely publicised through word of mouth and social media. It attracts large groups to regular workdays and fosters a real sense of community. Joint community days including Clean Up Australia Day, Threatened Species Day, various cultural talks and practise such as smoking ceremonies and traditional welcomes, fungi talks, native animal displays, and sharing the rich cultural heritage of Gully stories.

From the inception of the group to the present day, a holistic approach has been adopted with the aim of repairing a highly damaged and degraded swamp system surrounded by an ever-growing urbanised setting in a major catchment in a world heritage setting. In doing so, the group has not just healed Country, but forged significant links with local and environmental partners, as well as the local populace.

Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2016 National Landcare finalists, visit [www.landcareaustralia.org.au](http://www.landcareaustralia.org.au)

## Ends

For further information, photographs or interviews contact:

Naomi Straw  
Landcare Australia  
[naomi.straw@landcareaustralia.com.au](mailto:naomi.straw@landcareaustralia.com.au)  
02 8440 8823

David King  
Garguree Swampcare  
[davidkingbluemtns@gmail.com](mailto:davidkingbluemtns@gmail.com)  
0412 664 599

## Web Summary

With the recognition of The Gully as an Aboriginal Place in 2002, a joint management initiative began between The Gully Traditional Owners and the Blue Mountains City Council. In 2012, Garguree Swampcare was born. From the inception of the group to the present day, a holistic approach has been adopted with the aim of repairing a highly damaged and degraded swamp system surrounded by an ever-growing urbanised setting in a major catchment in a world heritage setting. In doing so, the group has not just healed Country, but forged significant links with local and environmental partners, as well as the local populace.

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