



# Connections to Sea Country – Aboriginal Peoples of Coastal NSW survey report FACTSHEET



## What does connection to Sea Country mean for Aboriginal Peoples of Coastal NSW?

We acknowledge and respect the connection and knowledge held by Aboriginal Peoples of NSW Sea Country areas and recognise that we all have a responsibility to maintain a healthy Sea Country.

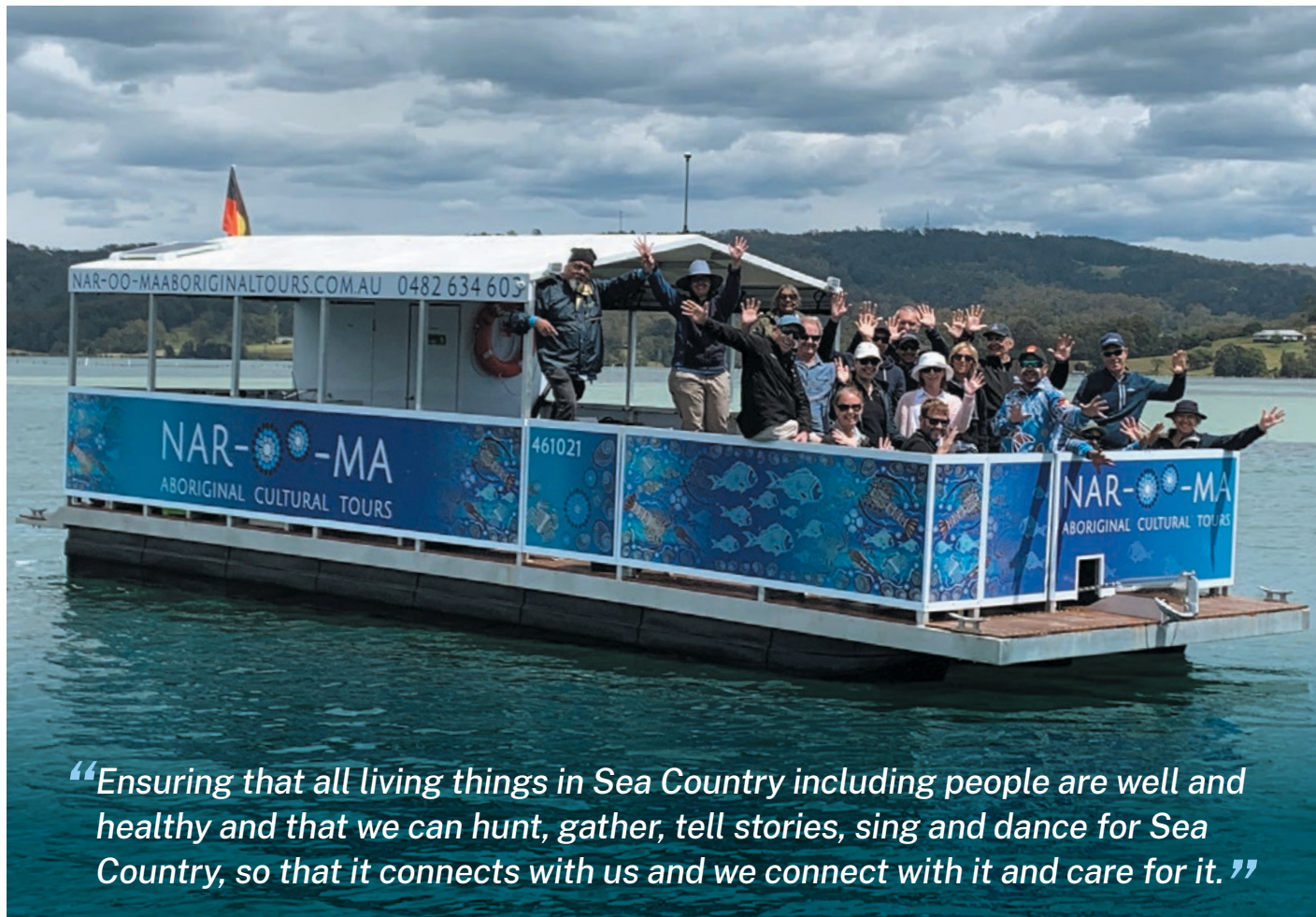
We want to ensure cultural connections are maintained now and into the future.

The Department of Primary Industries (DPI) recently commissioned a first-time survey to better understand:

*What does connection to Sea Country mean for Aboriginal Peoples of Coastal NSW?*

*What do we need to do to have a healthy, thriving Sea Country now, and for generations to come?*

Aboriginal communities in 11 locations were invited to complete a survey that was co-designed with DPI and Ipsos Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Research Unit and delivered by local Aboriginal people. This resulted in a number of findings set out in the Connections to Sea Country – Aboriginal Peoples of Coastal NSW survey report.



***“Ensuring that all living things in Sea Country including people are well and healthy and that we can hunt, gather, tell stories, sing and dance for Sea Country, so that it connects with us and we connect with it and care for it.”***



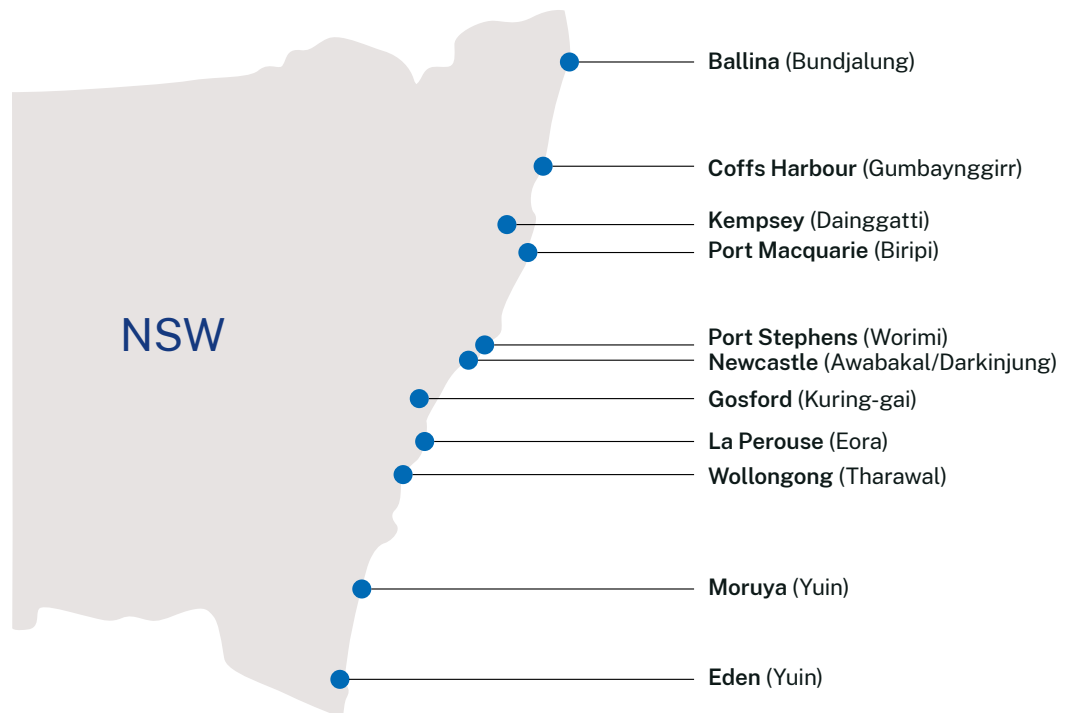
## WHAT WE LEARNED

- Sea Country is essential to cultural connection and key to the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal Peoples in New South Wales.
- The health of Sea Country is essential to the health of Aboriginal Peoples and our community at large. Sea Country is foundational to the identity of Aboriginal people as individuals, their families and communities in maintaining cultural connections now and into the future.
- Living on Sea Country gives places and spaces to spend quality time with family and community. In turn, we all have a responsibility to protect Sea Country from current and future environmental threats and impacts.
- The report showed that Aboriginal people surveyed had a number of concerns about the current health of Sea Country.
- We need to work together to preserve Sea Country for future generations and do so in a respectful, collaborative, and sustainable way.
- This survey is the first of what is intended to be a continuing conversation on the importance of and responsibilities for maintaining healthy Sea Country

## KEY FINDINGS

### Collaboration and consultation

People in **11 locations** that aligned with Aboriginal Nations along the NSW coast were consulted as part of an Aboriginal led face-to-face survey



## Cultural activities and traditions



**48%** of Aboriginal people visited local Sea Country at least once a week for cultural activities or maintaining traditions

The three most popular cultural activities related to Sea Country include –



Recreation

**75%**



Hook and line fishing

**61%**



Camping/  
staying on Sea Country

**57%**

The three most common other cultural activities or traditions –

Cultural celebrations

**69%**

Funerals/  
sorry business

**56%**

Passing on/receiving cultural knowledge responsibilities to care for Sea Country

**45%**

## Quality of life



• **9.3/10**

Score is given on how Aboriginal people surveyed rated the importance of Sea Country in contributing to quality of life

• **9.4/10**

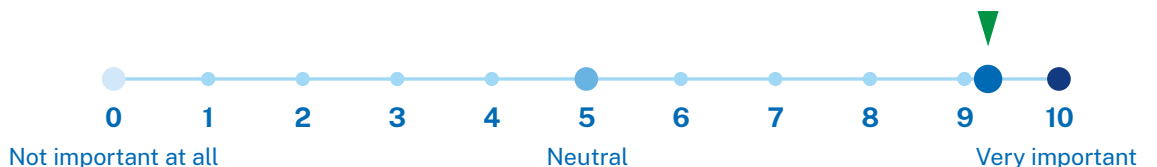
Score is given on how important Sea Country is in contributing to spending time/ socialising with family and community

• **9.3/10**

Score is given on how important Sea Country is in contributing to cultural identity

• **9.1/10**

Score is given on how important Sea Country is in contributing to emotional and mental health



## Caring for Sea Country

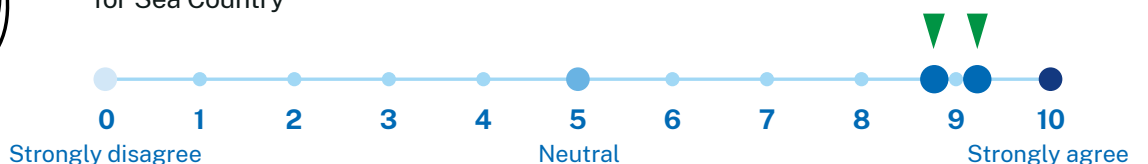


• **9.2/10**

Rating when asked if they agreed that the health of Sea Country is critical to protect Aboriginal cultures and traditions

• **8.8/10**

Rating when asked if they agreed they have cultural responsibilities to care for Sea Country



## Threats to cultural connections



**76%** at least moderately concerned about environmental problems that impact the way they value and use Sea Country

Less than half (**44%**) consider that Sea Country in their local area is currently in good health

Top reasons for negatively rating the health of their local Sea Country include –



Pollution

**28%**



Less food/  
people taking too much

**27%**



Rubbish/  
untidy beaches

**22%**

Top reasons for positively rating the health of their local Sea Country include –



Beaches and  
waterways being clean  
and rubbish free

**20%**



Abundant  
seafood

**14%**

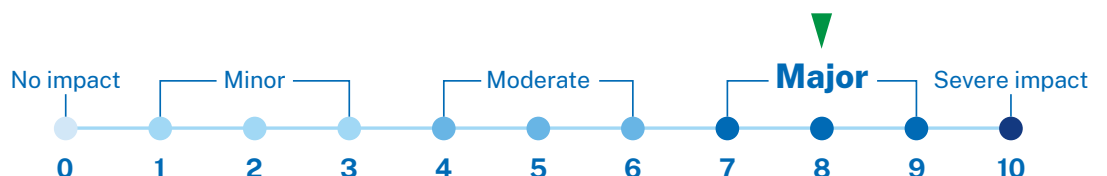


Maintained and  
cared for

**13%**

When asked about impact of key threats on cultural connections with Sea Country, the following were ranked:

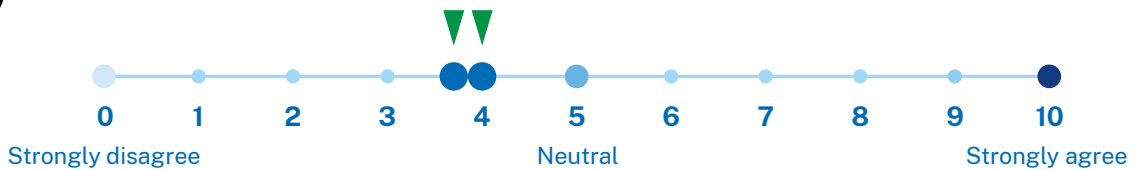
- Damage to habitats (**8.2/10**)
- Loss of natural habitats (**8.0/10**)
- Illegal activities (**8.0/10**)
- Lack of access to culturally significant sites due to management (**8.0/10**)
- Climate change (**7.9/10**)
- Overcrowding (**7.9/10**)



## Employment related to Sea Country



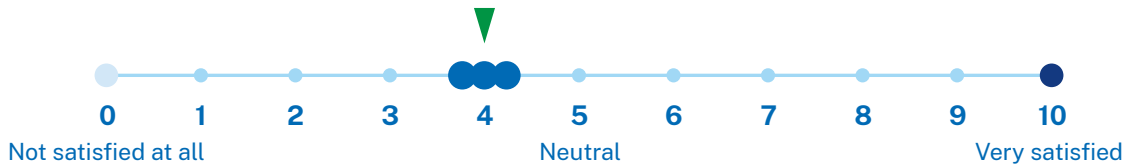
- **4/10**  
Rating when asked if they agree there are employment opportunities related to Sea Country
- **3.7/10**  
Rating when asked if they agree there are opportunities to develop Aboriginal commercial fishing and aquaculture interests



## Management of Sea Country



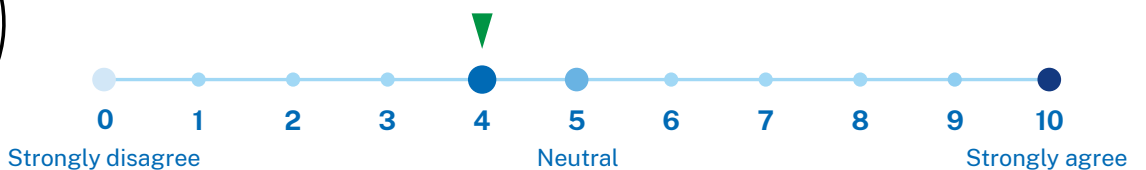
- People rated between **3.7-4.3/10** satisfaction when asked about cultural sites being preserved, current rules allowing them to easily undertake cultural activities and recognising Aboriginal cultural rights
- People rated under **4/10** satisfaction when asked about opportunities to have their say, finding and understanding current Sea Country management rules, information about how and why decisions are made.



## Education and Training



- **4/10**  
Rating when asked if they agree there are education and training opportunities related to Sea Country





## WHAT NEXT?

We very much appreciate the volume and depth of feedback we have received from the survey.

### **This is just the start.**

We want to continue to work together as we implement projects to protect Aboriginal cultural values as part of the Marine Estate Management Strategy. It is only through learning and growing together that we can all enjoy a thriving Sea Country now, and for generations to come.

Download the report at [www.marine.nsw.gov.au](http://www.marine.nsw.gov.au)



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#SeaCountryNSW

All designs and Illustrations are from, or based on the artwork, *Bindarray Maagun (River Feast)* by Gumbaynggirr artist, Lavinnia Inglis.

*“The connection to Sea Country is my identity it's a part of me just like everything else in our ecosystem, we are all connected. It provides a sense of healing and cleansing for the soul.”*

