



## Media Release

14 September 2016

### Eden community shares yam fields knowledge

Greening Australia is undertaking a project to revegetate Red Gum Plains funded by the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme. The project, coordinated through the East Gippsland Catchment Authority, is designed to help arrest the decline of the Red Gum Plains grasslands and involves 10ha hectares of works over 5 years. The Red Gum Plains were once dominated by extensive grasslands, which are now endangered with less than 5% remaining.

Bush foods have long represented knowledge and connection of indigenous people to culture. An innovative "Living Culture" project involves partnering with local Aboriginal women and aims to reinstate yam fields on a section of Gippsland grasslands, as both a Gunaikurnai cultural initiative and National Landcare project.

The plains originally included fields of wildflowers that supported the tubers or 'yams' which were a staple food for Gunaikurnai people. Greening Australia's Gippsland Project Manager, Martin Potts said that the partnership with local Aboriginal community members is a vital part of the "Living Culture" project.

"By recognising that these grasslands were once important yam fields, we can see the sites as not just ecologically important, but also culturally important places where women can once again grow and harvest the yams that were so crucial to the wellbeing of the community," he said.

Last week a group travelled to Eden Land Council's Jigamy Farm, just outside of Eden in NSW where there is a similar initiative involving looking after, and connecting Aboriginal people to, yam fields.

A group of 20 Aboriginal women met with local elders and women from the Eden project, who shared their knowledge of yam cultivation and use. The group was also presented with the Bundian Way story. The women made connections, providing support for those who want to take this initiative further in the Gippsland project.

"This is the start of engaging the community that will not only see these important grasslands restored in Gippsland, but in time will also become places of living culture for the local Aboriginal community," Martin said.

**Ends**

**(caption)**

**1. Local Aboriginal women travelled to Eden to share knowledge about yam cultivation, to feed into a Greening Australia “Living Culture” initiative being developed in East Gippsland.**

**2. The group learned about how to dig for yams.**

**3. Celebrating a successful day of sharing knowledge and culture: the group from East Gippsland and the women from the Eden Land Council’s Jigamy Farm project.**

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**Media contact:**

**Bernadine Phelan**

Communications and Engagement Officer  
East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority

t: 03 5150-3576

Email : [bphelan@egcma.com.au](mailto:bphelan@egcma.com.au)

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