



## BUSH HERITAGE AUSTRALIA

# Budjiti Traditional Owners return cultural artefacts back home on Naree Station Reserve in NSW

In an emotional ceremony late Tuesday afternoon, the Budjiti people of New South Wales and Queensland have repatriated more than 30 cultural artefacts back to their rightful home on Naree Reserve in northern NSW.

Download high res images from the ceremony [here](#)

Led by Budjiti Traditional Owner and Elder Phil Eulo, almost 40 local Aboriginal community members attended the ceremony – including Aunty Ruby, who was born on nearby Yantabulla.

Grinding stones, grinding plates, stone tools and message stones were returned to country in a place carefully chosen by Budjiti people to keep them safe on Naree.

Bush Heritage took on management of the ecologically important reserve in 2012, with reserve managers David and Sue Akers establishing a productive and respectful partnership with Phil and the Budjiti community.

Chief Executive of Bush Heritage, Gerard O'Neill, said working with Aboriginal people was critical to returning the bush to good health.

“We have been working side by side, listening and learning, from Aboriginal people since our first partnership was established in 2005, in the spirit of conservation but also reconciliation,” he said.

“They are the rightful custodians of this land, and have been looking after it for tens of thousands of years. We are grateful to the Budjiti people for sharing their knowledge and helping us look after Naree – a stunning inland waterbird nursery that we are committed to protecting for future generations.”

Budjiti Elder Phil Eulo said the ceremony represented a homecoming for his family, many of whom had not been on Country at Naree before.

“Working with Bush Heritage side by side means Budjiti people have more authority over our country and how to protect it for our future generations,” Phil said.

“Repatriating the artefacts means a lot to me and our people because when I come across artefacts on country it takes me back to my ancestors and how they used them to make their food.

“I’ve learnt a lot from my grandmother and mother about country, about these artefacts and it is my role to keep them safe and pass this knowledge on to our young ones.”

The cultural artefacts had previously been collected from traditional camping grounds across the then sheep and cattle station and placed around the homestead gardens. They have been stored safely since Bush Heritage took on the management of Naree.

The area on Country where the artefacts have been returned will be managed as a learning





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landscape for younger generations of Budjiti people and Aboriginal community members. Visitors to Naree will be able to visit the artefacts under Budjiti guidance.

Today's ceremony at Naree marks the first time a formal repatriation has occurred in a partnership on a Bush Heritage reserve. Bush Heritage owns 37 reserves around Australia and has 24 active Aboriginal partnerships, encompassing more than 8.86 million hectares of land.

A new learning resource developed as a collaboration between Budjiti people and Bush Heritage was also launched today that promotes Budjiti people's country, culture and knowledge.

The *Budjiti traditional use of plants on Naree Station* booklet contains information on the cultural uses of plants found on Naree such as Ironwood, Wild Orange and Belah. It complements a signposted walking and driving track at Naree. You can download the booklet on the [Bush Heritage website](#).

Bush Heritage is grateful for the support of Western Local Land Services, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, towards the repatriation ceremony and the *Budjiti traditional uses of plants on Naree Station* booklet.

### About Naree

- Naree is a 14,400-hectare conservation reserve in north-western New South Wales, 150 kilometres north west of Bourke.
- It is one of the 20 top waterbird sites in Australia and lies in the rich cultural landscape of the Mulga Lands bioregion

on the Cuttaburra Channels connecting the Paroo and Warrego rivers.

- The reserve helps protect species like the Brolga, Freckled Duck, Golden Perch, Peron's Tree Frog, White-browed Treecreeper and numerous species of bats.

### About the Budjiti Traditional Owners

- Budjiti people's ancestral lands span from far western New South Wales over the border into Queensland.
- The Budjiti people achieved Native Title determination for their lands in QLD in 2015 and are progressing their claim in NSW.

