Moving Forward: After its listing on the New South Wales Heritage Register, can the 265km Bundian Way bring benefits to the Aboriginal community?

John Blay
Abstract

The Bundian Way is an ancient Aboriginal pathway that had long been championed by the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council. The route was determined after a process of historical research, walking, consultation and physical survey. Two thirds of it lies in National Parks and State Forests. The remainder mostly follows old road reserves. On 18th January 2013 the Bundian Way was listed on the NSW State Heritage Register for its cultural and shared history values. The 265km route displays a remarkable diversity of scenic landscapes, ranging from Targangal (Mt Kosciuszko) through Nurudj-Djurung (the lower Snowy River) and across the southern edge of the treeless plains of the Monaro to the tall forests of the southern ranges and Bilgalera on Twofold Bay. Certain parts could be regarded as Aboriginal cultural landscapes. With the dispossessed Aboriginal communities of the region fragmented and cash-strapped and the project at a critical juncture, a snapshot of its progress to May 2013, is considered. Cultural tourism is a possibility. Can the project bring advantages to the Aboriginal people of south-eastern Australia?

Introduction

A strange thing happened out in the wild dingo country of Kosciuszko National Park while we were walking the Bundian Way on the lookout for blazed trees. The marks were cut every mile by Surveyor Townsend during his 1841-42 survey from Port Albert via Omeo to the headwaters of the Shoalhaven in the company of Aboriginal guides (Townsend to Mitchell 5th Oct 1842 AONSW). The country was terribly rugged. Every now and again we would come into scrub and were overtaken by the abject feeling we had become lost. But something strange started to happen. We could tell when the excitement was fading. As soon as we came back on track the excitement was there again. It seemed trustworthy though, like an electrical charge there to keep us on track. Or that’s as close as I can describe it. The Kooris I was working with figured it was more like the Bundian Way singing to us. Each of us could feel sensation, whatever it was. It continued, especially in the wilder, most remote country, and, even later on, it stayed with us through some very difficult times as we attempted to get official recognition of the route.

I have been involved with the Bundian Way for over ten years through Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council (LALC) as its Bundian Way Project Officer, usually working closely from day to day with its Chair, BJ Cruse, and Elder, Uncle Ossie Cruse. We’ve had to battle at times to get the idea accepted by the Commonwealth and NSW bureaucracies and, as various aspects started to work out, new levels of complication arose. But we do now have cooperation and a management advisory committee, of which I am the chair, comprising all the major agencies of the region. These include as partners/members: Eden LALC, Department of Education Learning...
Progress to Date

At a management meeting on 27th February 2013, I summarised how the Bundian Way was moving forwards. A lot had happened in the past twelve months to keep us on track. We had taken major steps, for example, in winning a NSW heritage volunteers award for 2012. The NSW Heritage Minister, Robyn Parker’s citation stated:

The Bundian Way Advisory Committee has been instrumental in assisting the Eden Local Aboriginal Land Council and other stakeholders in delivering the Bundian Way Project. Their work acknowledges the ancient pathway made by local Aboriginal peoples from the Snowy Mountains to the sea, which served as a trading route and important cultural network. The Bundian Way Project seeks to provide unique heritage experiences along the pathway, delivered via ‘hubs’ including an Art Gallery and example campsites. The project features both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal elements that celebrate the pathway as part of our shared heritage. (2012 NSW Government Heritage Volunteer Award Recipients – Citations, p. 2-3, John Blay Private Collection)

It was a big ten-year effort to get the heritage significance of the Bundian Way recognised. As a long distance place, we were told, it was not suitable for Commonwealth listing because the formal description alone would take many volumes of Hansard. It was, however, finally listed on the NSW State Heritage Register. This was published in the NSW Government Gazette of 18th January 2013. Its formal statement of significance says:

The Bundian Way is of State significance as a rare surviving ancient pathway used by Aboriginal people over thousands of years linking the high country at Kosciuszko and the coast at Eden. The Bundian Way is associated with seasonal gatherings of Aboriginal tribes on the Snowy River for Bogong moth collection and on the Eden Coast during whale migration. It is historically significant for its role in early colonisation whereby white settlers were aided by Aboriginal guides in exploration and the search for pastures.
Historical documentation and archaeology found on the route reinforces traditional knowledge held by contemporary Aboriginal society and provides a strong validation of the social significance of this pathway today. The Way continues to be an important place of education and cultural activity in the Aboriginal community. The Bundian Way travels through wilderness areas of untouched beauty with spectacular views over the coastal plain which contributes to the aesthetic significance of the route.

Date significance updated: 25 January 2013 (Heritage Office Database number: 5060185 2013)

The Heritage Office also formally describes Bundian Way as ‘a pathway traversing and connecting two landscapes: Targangal (Kosciuszko) and Bilgalera (Fisheries Beach) on Tullemullerer (Twofold Bay) … which is 265km in length. The width of the curtilage of the route is 20 metres and generally follows fire trails, tracks and forestry roads…’ (Heritage Office Database number: 5060185 2013)

With the heritage recognition secured, there were numerous other issues we had to address in order to maintain some form of ‘Aboriginal ownership’ of the project. Once established, after a great deal of work, we decided to do everything we could that would help avoid the project being colonised. To secure our intellectual property we have registered Bundian Way trademarks, internet domain names and established a dedicated website. A brand is being developed so that our activities look distinctive. A Strategic Plan has also been drafted to bring together many of the labyrinthine tasks that have to be navigated before any official opening can take place. Also, coupled with the heritage recognition, we have made the first six of about twenty or so Aboriginal Place nominations. These include lands on the southern shores of Twofold Bay, and the Yamfields site on the crest of the Monaro. The intention is that they will serve as teaching places along the way, places of note that deserve special attention or management. Then an important step forwards came with the completion of the Balawan-Imlay Bundian Way campsite, with the assistance of a special grant from State Forests. This camp has been eagerly sought by schools along the route.

At the beginning of December we saw the opening of the Bundian Way Aboriginal Art Gallery by Mark McKenna, historian and strong supporter of the Bundian Way. Those who were able to come to Delegate for the opening experienced a very special event, one that did local Aboriginal artists proud. Most of the paintings had a reference to the Bundian Way and showed the depth of culture that stands behind the project. This background was an important factor in the strong sales, witnessing that with the right opportunities, its...
influence can bring economic benefits to the Aboriginal people. The gallery has also brought a
great number of visitors to Delegate. It has sparked interest in the wider region, which suggests
that the benefits are not restricted to the Aboriginal community. This is just the beginning of
realising the promise of the Bundian Way. Inspired by the positive response to the exhibition,
the event was recognised in Bombala Shire as the Community Event of the Year.

The second exhibition, *Healing our Spirit*, was opened on Saturday 9th of March 2013 by
Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, who gave a
powerful speech. He praised the art and the imagination of the exhibition, its relevance to
the Bundian Way, and considered what it will mean for the Aboriginal people in custody. He
added, ‘And what we’re seeing with the Bundian Way is a reconciliation. It’s a mechanism. You
don’t just get people waking up one day and saying, ‘Let’s do reconciliation.’ This is a track, a
meeting place, that links the freshwater to the saltwater, the beaches to the mountains. People
traversed that track for a lot longer than most of us can get our heads around. And it should be
a track for all of us to come together now, where we can come together and understand the
value of what’s happening in our age...’ (*Bombala Times* 12 March. 2013, p.1)

There have been other indicators of progress during the past year. We are optimistic that we
will secure funding to complete a strategic interpretation/signage plan for the entire route and
to begin track clearing of parts of the old route between Eden and Bilgalera (Fisheries Beach) to
provide an attractive and educational tourist walk.

Two major proposals are for an education centre at Bilgalera, designed by Australian architect,
Glenn Murcutt, to connect with schools and tourism and cultural guiding job opportunities
with the newly developed 30km National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Light to Light Walk.
Rangers trained on this project will receive further training to accredit them to become Bundian
Way Rangers.

In tandem, we have negotiations in train to acquire land for a wilderness lodge adjacent
to the western edge of Kosciuszko National Park. This would give us an economic base for
guiding, cultural, adventure and walking activities through landscapes that are internationally-
recognised as a result of promotions under Australia’s National Landscapes Program managed
by Tourism Australia and Parks Australia, under a unique partnership aiming to achieve
environmental, social and economic outcomes for Australia’s most significant natural areas
and their surrounding regions. The Bundian Way runs between two of these, the Australian
Alps and Australia’s Coastal Wilderness, and also intersects Man from Snowy River country and,
across the Monaro, Platypus Country.

The project has had to take a staged process in developing the route as a business. The aim is
to keep as many Aboriginal people as possible working on the Bundian Way projects. In the
real world, funding from State and Commonwealth sources has dried up. The Commonwealth
Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) had suggested in
August 2012 there were no Indigenous Employment Program (IEP) funds available to help
us in business planning and further employment generation. As soon as possible I believe
we should consider forming a Bundian Way Aboriginal Corporation to allow for effective
governance, which will enable us to obtain corporate sponsorship, philanthropy and such.
This business aspect sounds simple enough. If a couple of hungry young people had a good
idea for a business, they would just start trading and see what happens. They would sort out
the complications as they go. But that’s not an option in this case, where there are so many
interests and due formalities have to be observed.

We are about to enter a partnership with NSW Corrective Services, which has already brought
about the *Healing our Spirit* exhibition, so that every Aboriginal prisoner in NSW will put in
time, walking or working, on elements of the Bundian Way each year. Hopefully, also, young
offenders will also be mentored in Country.

We have a dedicated web site that attracts plenty of attention. Nowadays we regularly receive
enquiries from people wanting to do the walk and have to politely defer, saying we’re only
able to send details when the route is officially open. Risk assessments have to be done across
the whole range of tenures along the route. For the time being we will be helping one or two
affiliated / insured bushwalking groups to do the walk, and exchanging information towards compiling track notes.

That is a summation of how the Bundian Way has been moving forwards, but it’s not all we’ve been doing. The Bundian Way project has achieved both tangible and intangible benefits to date: a wealth of supportive partnerships and collaboration, an official web site, recognition of Aboriginal artistic talent and a boost in sales, the establishment of a trail-associated campsite, strategic planning for activities including an education centre, interpretation and signage and both Aboriginal Place nominations and heritage management of the entire route. In my opinion that’s not enough. With the official heritage recognition of the route, a fork in the road has been reached. The project can now either be consolidated in its current form or developed further to new levels.

My inclination for a way forward is to pursue other issues so often considered at our management meetings. It will be fundamental to the future of the Bundian Way. Jobless young, who represent the overwhelming majority of the Aboriginal population of Eden, regularly accost me, saying how they want jobs now, not next week or next year. But to achieve economic advantages from the project, we must find a consensus on how to move towards our goals.

So, to put it as briefly as possible, the Bundian Way is State Heritage, a long distance place, a walking route, a pathway, an Aboriginal cultural place, and a shared history project. Already attracting international interest, its best potential, I believe, lies in education, in tourism and particularly niche cultural tourism. It can create Aboriginal jobs. It can benefit the whole community of the far South Eastern region. But the level of job-creation and community benefits will depend on how we progress.

Tourism Potential of Long Distance Walking Trails

There are many long distance walking trails around the world. And they’re growing in popularity. What sets the Bundian Way apart from so many others is that it is governed by the Aboriginal people, a big and exciting difference. By way of comparison with other projects some details from the Bibbulman Track in Western Australia are pertinent.

A good comparison of the costs and benefits shows how WA’s Track brings in millions of dollars a day to the state with strong benefits to communities along the way. That might sound like a lot of money, but it takes account of the track’s pulling power and flow-ons. Aboriginal communities have a direct local connection rather than any overall role. Management is by a government supported non-profit foundation. Its extensive website documents how it was set up over ten years with at least three fully resourced Forestry and Parks, Recreation, Planning and Tourism staffers. By way of comparison the Bundian Way would directly benefit the Aboriginal people of the South East region, whose unemployment rate is extremely high, and create jobs that are especially culturally based. Management would come from the gateway at Aboriginal Culture Centre Monaroo Bobberer Gudu at Jigamy on the shores of Pambula Lake near Eden. Land management, support and guiding by trained Bundian Way rangers would set the project apart. This is an attraction to that majority of the international travel market who seek ‘indigenous culture-based experiences.’ But the benefits would flow through the whole of the region, especially the parts from Cooma and Narooma southwards where the majority of the region’s Aboriginal population lives.

In more detail, after the start of planning in 1972, the Bibbulmun Track was officially opened in October 1979 and within ten years it was estimated that up to 10,000 people were using the Track annually (details come from its web site and conversations with a senior officer). That number has ballooned in recent years after overhauls and upgrades by the WA Department of Conservation and Land Management (CALM) and a decision made in the 1990s to turn it into one of the world’s great long distance trails (http://www.bibbulmuntrack.org.au/).

A few comparisons between its first years and the present day emphasise the point:

- In mid 1998, there were approximately 300 volunteers assisting in various categories; today there are in excess of 2,400. There was one computer in the office then; today there are seven computer stations in full time use.
In 1999/2000 the office was open three days a week, closed for the whole of January, with one part-time staff member and one (occasionally two) volunteers a day. Today, the office is open year-round, five days a week. There are two full-time and three part-time staff, and usually three volunteers a day in the office to handle enquiries, event bookings, memberships and such.

A calendar of events was being prepared containing five or six events for the year, compared with the two half-yearly calendars now in existence, each containing 25 to 30 events. A website was being discussed – the current Bibbulmun Track website has in excess of 100 pages.

One or two merchandise items were being offered then, compared to the twenty or so now, plus the books and maps relating to the Track.

Currently there is every indication that these activities will continue to gather increasing interest and use of the Track will continue to grow (Baker 2007).

What the Bundian Way should learn from this experience is that it might take years to establish our walking route, but, as with the WA project, we will certainly require the assistance of government to make our way through the administrative issues involved. Volunteers will be vital, plus corporate sponsorship.

**Moving Forward**

To move the project forward effectively it has been our first priority to make an acceptable superstructure to carry the project. And for the next step we will have to engage in all manner of partnerships. The NSW Aboriginal Land Council serves as a formal statutory consent authority on each stage of proposed business and land dealings and we will have much work to do in terms of business planning to justify our activities. All agencies involved will have to sign off, not only on the exact route, but also on risk assessments. To begin with, we will most likely open one stage of the walk at a time. So that by the time we invite people to walk the whole route, everything will be ready and safe for the walkers, tourists, prisoners, schoolchildren, and we have an effective organisation to supply guides, support and necessary information about the route.

In the end travellers will be able to learn about Country and Aboriginal culture in Country from Aboriginal ranger/guides. And perhaps it is that the ever-changing but spectacular nature of the countryside the Bundian Way passes through would help it become widely known as the most varied, indeed beautiful, long-distance walking route in the world. It provides a physical connection between two designated Australian National Landscapes, Australia’s Coastal Wilderness and the Australian Alps. Tourism Australia and Parks Australia are internationally marketing the innovative National Landscapes Program that showcases some of Australia’s most distinctive National Parks and their associated regions (Australia’s National Landscapes Program, Tourism Australia, viewed 9th May 2013 at http://www.tourism.australia.com/campaigns/national-landscapes.aspx)

Jobs and economic advancement are key priorities of the Eden LALC. For the Bundian Way, the priority is for Aboriginal employment. A case study of the situation in the Eden LALC area found:

It is likely the total Aboriginal population in the area covered by the Eden LALC is around 250 to 300 people. The Community, Land and Business Plan records that Eden LALC has 70 members, who tend to be the older members of the community, and efforts are being made to encourage younger people to participate. High unemployment among the 42 members who responded to a survey undertaken in 2007 is the reason the LALC wants to pursue economic development opportunities. However, education levels are relatively low, although the situation is changing with more young people now completing Year 12 and a small number going on to tertiary education, although they have to leave Eden to do so. The non-Indigenous population of the area also has relatively low levels of education, and there are very limited tertiary education opportunities in the region (Hunt 2013, 9).
Eden has approximately 3,000 residents, of whom 206 were recorded as Indigenous in the 2006 Census, 6.9% of the population. Estimates currently suggest that population has increased markedly, with a very high proportion unemployed. As time goes by in Eden we see the gap, identified by the Federal Government as existing between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians, generally keeps widening. The Bundian Way has had little effect on these figures to date. With state and federal governments reducing spending, the future does not look too optimistic.

While we would love to open the Bundian Way tomorrow, officially that might be 10 years or more away due to the bureaucratic obstacles, difficulties and necessary processes compounded by the loss of staff in the land management agencies of the region. These were often the key people assisting us in the incomplete process of setting up the Bundian Way to date. The hurdles that remain include tasks like: formally mapping the route in fine detail so all the agencies have the same data; dealing with the multiplicity of tenures; risk assessments across tenures; insurances; training; campsite preparations/construction; surveying; Aboriginal title assessments; development applications; multiple permissions; branding, promotion and public relations; preparing track notes, etc. and so forth. One way to advance the project more rapidly would be for the NSW Government to fund, probably on a whole of Government basis (rather than from the budget of a particular department), either a position at Jigamy, plus office support and vehicle, or one seconded from an agency to meet the demands of completing development of the route. Another option would be to find funding from the federal government. But in the current political and fiscal environment, neither possibility is promising unless the project looks to sponsorship and philanthropy. Nonetheless, to approach our goal of increased Aboriginal employment we will require the assistance of a beleaguered bureaucracy.

The Eden LALC’s contributions to the project have been considerable, both in voluntary person-hours as well as financially. Its 4WD twin cab vehicle, vital in accessing fire trail sections of the Bundian Way during the survey and ongoing administration, is now beyond repair. A 4WD is the essential key to other employment-generation aspects of the land council’s operations such as land and sea country works, forest surveys and land maintenance. The LALC now has to think carefully about whether it can afford to borrow sufficient funds to replace it.

Apart from the Land and Sea Country Coordinator, Aboriginal jobs on the project have been for short periods, and they have flowed from various government subsidies and grants such as for the 2010-11 survey. While we propose a staged approach to developing the route, any longer term new jobs are not likely until the whole project is opened to the public and actively promoted. That is when we will be looking for self-sufficiency. Therefore, the sooner numerous practical and bureaucratic hurdles can be overcome the sooner economic benefits can flow to the Aboriginal communities. Assistance and cooperation would help us overcome those hurdles. We press on regardless.

Yamfields: Management of Aboriginal Values in the Landscape

Recognition of Aboriginal values in the landscape can bring unexpected breakthroughs and benefits. But the process can result in increased administrative burdens. To take one example,
the Bondi Springs Yamfields site is a very special place that requires appropriate management. During the route survey process for the Bundian Way some Yam Daisies (Nyamin, Murrnong, *Microseris spp*.), now rare or endangered on the Monaro, were found in a swamp at the edge of grassy woodland on the far south-eastern corner of the Monaro. Investigations revealed more to the place than met the eye. More and more food species were found nearby, some of which were also rare or endangered in the region. Such an assemblage of food plants would suggest Aboriginal habitation over time. Then a scar tree and large numbers of artefacts were found. Ongoing research and investigation indicated the place marks the beginning of the old Bundian Pass and that it has many interconnections with other sites along the Bundian Way.

The Bondi (or Bundian) Springs were much used by the old Aboriginal people. After European settlement in the 1830s, continuing and overlapping its Aboriginal use, travellers and bullockies found it convenient to break their journey at the watered camping place at the top of the range. It lies at the southern rim of the Monaro, near the Bare Hill (Gulgin or Calkin) above Bundian, Boondiang or Bondi Station, later Rockton, near the boundary with the old Maharatta Run. The block of forty acres was first acknowledged as Bondi Springs Wayside Rest in 1872. It is located directly beside the old way to Cann River, near the present Monaro Highway and now designated as Mountaintop Travelling Stock Reserve (TSR 56958). The fenced boundary includes some freehold land, approximately 3.47ha. Aboriginal Land Rights Claim 10887 covering the TSR land was lodged on the 1st of May 2006.

Having found the once common but now regionally endangered Yam Daisies on the site, it was resolved to undertake a plot survey there. Plots were surveyed on a one kilometre grid along and to either side of the Bundian Way route. The survey took account of artefact distribution in each plot of thirty trees as well as signs of koala and other wildlife, tree size and species, scats and such. Although laborious, the surveying brought worthwhile insights into the countryside about the route. For example, few plots revealed no artefacts while others were surprisingly rich: one plot had artefacts within a metre of sixteen out of thirty trees.

Altogether, the study concluded the Yamfields site was significant, not least for its unusual concentrations of food plants, artefact scatters and scarred trees. The location is where two ancient routes crossed, one running east-west between the coast and the mountains via the Bundian Pass and Delegate, the other south-north between the Cann River and Bombala districts.

As time goes by and more information is gathered, the significance of the cumulative knowledge grows. For example, we have observed how many of the yam plants come into flower in mid-December, at the time people would have been moving through on their way to the High Country for the Bogong festivities.

In my opinion it is the richest yam garden of the Monaro due to its population of significant species including: Yam Daisy (Nyamin or Murrnong)- *Microseris spp*. Many hundreds were still flowering in April/May, seeding May. Also present were numerous other yam plants, including orchids: Double-tail, *Diuris monticola*, *behrii* and *sulphurea*, Onion Orchid, *Microtis unifolia*, Greenhood, *Pterstylis* spp and lilies: masses of both Vanilla Lily, *Arthropodium milleflorum* and Native Leek, *Bulbine bulbosa*, as well as Paroo Lily, *Dianella caerulea var. caerulea*. Also other Aboriginal food plants, including *Lomandra longifolia*, *Acacia melanoxylon*, *Hypoxis Hygrometrica*, *Gahnia* spp, *Prunella vulgaris* and others.

These would be the perfect flats for yam cultivation. The locality is mostly sandy, with late Devonian sediments and water all year round, comprising grassland, grassy woodlands and swamplands on gravel, sand, clay and probably lignite. The trees are mostly White Sallee, Ribbony Gum and Swamp Gum, with Narrow Leaf Peppermints on higher parts. It has yabbies, active wombat holes and tree hollows.

The identification of special Aboriginal places along the route requires the development of specific management provisions. In addition to the Yamfields site other Aboriginal sites were observed on the surrounding hills, mostly on freehold land. The place has not been publicised to date as drawing attention to the values brought the risk from increasing visitation. The problem of souvenir hunters is ever present. Some conservationists wanted to come and collect seeds in a way that could endanger the existing populations. It currently has live-in populations of
rabbits which could become a problem when the area dries out more. Wild pigs appear to visit reasonably often – their presence will require monitoring to ensure they don’t take up residence.

This is a place where it was decided special protections are needed. It has scientific values as well as cultural values. And it would stand as one of the distinct Aboriginal landscapes of the Bundian Way. Arrangements are under way for Eden LALC to purchase the small freehold section. An Aboriginal Place nomination is currently in process so that a culturally based management plan can be put in place as soon as possible. More scientific research projects are proposed. Although there are no obvious economic advantages in the place, higher values come into play. At some time in the future it could be where the young are educated in the place’s special qualities. It could make an educational showpiece, for women’s business, where the community might bring schoolchildren and demonstrate care for country, such as the value of de-compacting the soil, how and when to dig the yam plants, use of Aboriginal fire techniques and so forth. It will help boost the understanding of traditional cultural places and give Aboriginal people the opportunity to participate in scientific research.

As the Bundian Way moves forward, it seems that, at least in the short term, more and more disciplines could be engaged. Insights into Country seem to make the project grow more demanding with every step.

Benefits Beyond the Financial

Although Aboriginal jobs are the first priority, are they the only benefit that would come from the Bundian Way? Indeed, quite apart from the excitement of staying on track, regional Aboriginal culture has been given a very special boost. The route provides a focus for that expression, as witness the success of the art exhibitions. At the same time the focus makes recognition easier, as with Aboriginal cultural values in the countryside, exemplified by the Yamfields site. Already the project has produced social benefits in bringing people together. The enthusiastic cooperation of communities, schools and agencies from along the Bundian Way reveal a measure of acceptance, indeed an embrace, of the concept. And there are other aspects which are already making their presence felt. Most relate to the spirit. Foremost is its healing effect. During the survey process, working in the field along the route with about four Aboriginal people for ten days each fortnight, some twenty in all, the most common response, after a few days, was how much better they felt. Healing was the main result of their participation in the project, most agreed, after they had spent a longer period in the bush (Blay 2012). When we meet up again in the times after our survey, nods and smiles indicate our secret, that sense of well-being that came from our extended time along the route.

There are many aspects to the increasing world-wide interest in following long-distance pathways. Some people might walk for their health or the glamour of it or the beauty. Others might have a spiritual or higher aim that makes their walk a pilgrimage, not necessarily with the overview of a major world religion. Sometimes walkers simply wish to reconnect with nature. The Bundian Way will offer educational experiences, especially for schoolchildren, as well as training and the promise of jobs in natural resources. But more significantly it will present the opportunity to find meaning along the way. It is a route, maybe a form of pilgrimage, through the entwined Aboriginal and settler history that can be revealed best on location in Country. It gives the opportunity to find connection with the way of things, with the wild, Country beyond the reach of settlement and motorised vehicles, with Aboriginal Australia. It can bring people together, much in the spirit of Al.mil.gong who, in August, 1844, walked some 400km from near Omeo to Twofold Bay to bring the corroboree he arranged for the Monaro and their friends (Robinson 1844).

The Bundian Way has already brought advantages to the Aboriginal people of South East Australia. Not many so far have been economic in the sense of on-going jobs or financial profits, but there have been other benefits and changes of perception that promise much for the future. Heritage listing is but one element in the impetus of the Bundian Way historic route development that could ultimately bring wide ranging benefits to the Aboriginal community and region. That tingle of excitement from being on track is still there, in fact it’s growing.
Post Script

On 23rd May 2013 we were informed by the Queanbeyan Indigenous Coordination Centre (QICC) that we have been offered funding intended to: employ a full time Bundian Way Project Manager for two years; implement components of the Bundian Way Strategic Plan; liaise between stakeholders to deliver committed and potential resources; coordinate the business planning process; seek ongoing funding from external sources; and develop strategies to generate capital to fund the position in to the future. The QICC is providing a total of $200,000.00 to support the Eden LALC and the Bundian Way Advisory Committee to effectively and efficiently drive enterprise development.

This should be the essential assistance that helps us move from being a purely voluntary organisation towards that level of professionalism the project’s development has been demanding. The mainspring for us to move forwards has come.

References


