



Taungurung Land and Waters Council  
*Annual Report 2023–2024*





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# Who WE ARE

The Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC) is the corporate representative of the Taungurung people.

- 2003** The organisation was established in 2003 to advocate for Taungurung recognition and land management rights with regard to our traditional Country.
- 2009** TLaWC was given Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) status in 2009, which has recognised Taungurung Traditional Owners as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and allowed for the management of cultural heritage across Taungurung Country.
- 2018** In 2018, TLaWC reached an historic settlement with the State of Victoria through a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) the culmination of over a decade of hard work and negotiation. TLaWC now manages Traditional Owner rights and exercises the responsibilities set out in the RSA.

The formal recognition of the Taungurung people's long standing rights and obligations on Country has created many new opportunities, including ensuring the Taungurung voice is heard clearly in relation to any significant activities on the Taungurung Crown land estate.

## KEY functions OF TLaWC

- To support Taungurung people to be the voice of Country
- To support Taungurung Community to be a people with a strong sense of identity, and self-determining in the healing and caring of Country and Culture
- Through the guidance and leadership of Taungurung people, TLaWC is to support the revitalisation of the Taungurung Nation
- To raise awareness, respect and understanding of Taungurung people, culture and Country
- To enhance the benefits and opportunities for Taungurung people in employment, living on Country, and overall well-being
- To increase the economic strength and security of the Taungurung Nation through investments, property, and partnerships
- To preserve and reinvigorate cultural knowledge for current and future generations
- To revive the Taungurung language for use in community
- To be the keeper of shared Taungurung land, assets and intellectual property
- To engage with partners for the best outcomes in land and water management across Country
- To inspire Taungurung people to engage with their culture, live on their Country and take an active role in events
- To activate Taungurung cultural land management knowledge and practice through the guidance of Lore and Taungurung obligations to Country



- INTEGRITY** – We act and communicate with honesty and authenticity
- RESPECT** – We treat our team, our members, and all other people with respect and sensitivity, recognising the importance of diversity
- CULTURAL COMPETENCY** – We are committed to cultural safety and cultural integrity in all we do
- ACCEPT AND GROW STRONGER** – We accept our failures and grow stronger from our learnings
- ACCOUNTABILITY** – We accept responsibility for our actions. We remain resilient and committed to achieving morally right outcomes
- TEAMWORK** – We are one team representing one people – respecting each other's contributions, and caring for each other both personally and professionally
- SAFETY AND WELLBEING** – We all have a responsibility to support the physical and mental wellbeing of the team and the Taungurung community
- LEADERSHIP** – We remain bold and brave and take on new challenges, embracing positive change and committed to achieving the best outcomes for the Taungurung community



The  
Four Pillars

**COMMUNITY**

**Strengthening our community**

1. Strengthening Taungurung Community
2. Contributing to Health and Wellbeing
3. Improving Connectivity to Community

**COUNTRY**

**Managing our Country**

4. Building Our Land Base
5. Managing Country through Traditional and Modern techniques

**CULTURE**

**Protecting and reviving our culture**

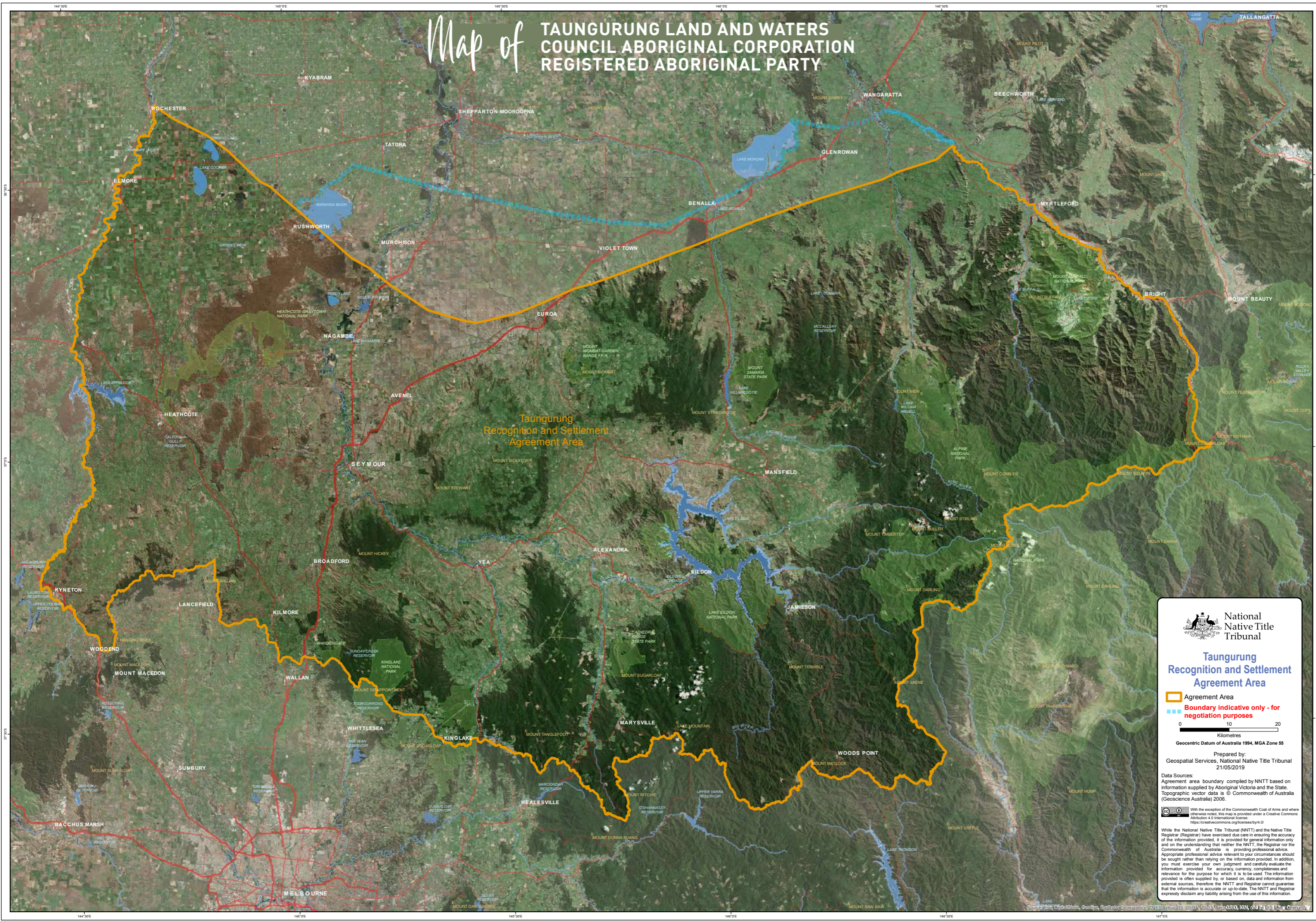
6. Reviving Our Language
7. Restoring Cultural Knowledge
8. Protecting and Preserving our Cultural Heritage

**CORPORATE**

**Building our economic independence**

9. Strengthening Organisational Capacity
10. Ensuring Financial Sustainability
11. Building Strong Corporate Partnerships

# Map of TAUNGURUNG LAND AND WATERS COUNCIL ABORIGINAL CORPORATION REGISTERED ABORIGINAL PARTY



Taungurung  
Recognition and Settlement  
Agreement Area

National Native Title Tribunal

**Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement Area**

Agreement Area

Boundary indicative only - for negotiation purposes

0 10 20  
Kilometres

Geocentric Datum of Australia 1994, MGA Zone 55

Prepared by:  
Geospatial Services, National Native Title Tribunal  
21/05/2019

Data Sources:  
Agreement area boundary compiled by NNTT based on information supplied by Aboriginal Victoria and the State. Topographic vector data is © Commonwealth of Australia (Geoscience Australia) 2006.

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While the National Native Title Tribunal (NNTT) and the Native Title Registrar (Registrar) have exercised due care in ensuring the accuracy of the information provided, it is provided for general information only and on the understanding that neither the NNTT, the Registrar nor the Commonwealth of Australia is providing professional advice. Appropriate professional advice relevant to your circumstances should be sought rather than relying on the information provided. In addition, you must exercise your own judgment and carefully evaluate the information provided for accuracy, currency, completeness and relevance for the purpose for which it is to be used. The information provided is often supplied by, or based on, data and information from external sources, therefore the NNTT and Registrar cannot guarantee that the information is accurate or up-to-date. The NNTT and Registrar expressly disclaim any liability arising from the use of this information.

# CHAIRPERSON *Report*

As Chairperson of the Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC) and on behalf of the Board, I present the Annual Report for the 2023/2024 financial year.

The last twelve months saw progression on a range of initiatives and opportunities created to strengthen the Taungurung Nation. This report details the changes that were made at the start of 2024 to enhance operations and lead the organisation forward in best supporting Taungurung people and Country. While the internal work was stable, the external noise surrounding the Referendum was unfortunate and led to a disappointing result. This was not what we hoped for as a Nation and demonstrates the need for further resources in educating all communities about the benefits of a Traditional Owner Voice to Parliament. In spite of the outcome, the strength of Mob surpassed the result and I was proud of our community for hosting the gathering event at Camp Jungai on Taungurung Country, showcasing the unity and connection we all have recognition, respect and Treaty.

In November 2023, TLaWC received an invitation from Senator Jana Stewart to represent Traditional Owner interests at a meeting with the Prime Minister and the Minister for Indigenous Australians. Attending on behalf of the Taungurung Nation, we advocated for enhanced leadership in decision making around matters affecting Country, as well as greater investment into opportunities for economic development for Mob. We returned to Canberra in 2024 to represent TLaWC in the second Delegation of Victorian First Nations Leaders, discussing health, education and economic outcomes for our Mob. We highlighted the current challenges with the way funding is designed and made a strong push for change. In summary, deadly connections made with so many prominent people able to assist in building a brighter future for our Nation and the broader community.

The revitalisation of the Taungurung language is a continued focus at TLaWC, led by the Language Reference Group (LRG) and the dedication of Aunty Loraine Padgham to drive on the path to drive a

range of initiatives for involvement. The release of Dhumbak Taungurung – an A6 booklet with a range of translated words and phrases, designed by Taungurung woman Maddi Moser – was another valuable resource that can be accessed by all communities to further understand and use the Taungurung language. There has been a strong appetite from schools and kindergartens to acquire these resources for use in educational settings, with further projects and releases slated for the next financial year.

There are two final, yet extremely important mentions prior to advancing through this book as we delve into the many achievements made across the 23/24 year. The first is to our Elders. 'For Our Elders' was such a fitting theme in the 2023 NAIDOC Week celebrations, providing the opportunity to thank and celebrate our Uncles and Aunties for their advocacy, leadership and sharing of cultural knowledge in our communities. I conducted a Cultural Governance consultation for Taungurung Elders in 2024, discussing the characteristics of being an Elder, Knowledge Holder or community leader. Together, we workshopped the cultural governance and protocols of an Elders Council and the role they will play in supporting the Taungurung community.

Elders are the vital connection between our past, present and future, and passing on cultural knowledge ensures that important information can then be shared with the younger generations to understand and continue our traditions.

Secondly, it was with great sadness that we acknowledged the passing of Gary Hansen, whose sudden death shocked the Taungurung community. Gary was a proud Taungurung man, contributing positively to the Taungurung community in various ways over many years, both as an employee and in a voluntary capacity. Gary also served on the Board over the years and was for some time the Secretary of the old Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC). The loss of any Taungurung person is a very great loss to our community – and the loss of Gary is certainly no exception. We will not forget him.

Thank you to the Board, CEO Matthew Burns, the leadership team and all staff for their continued commitment in upholding the interests of all Taungurung people while healing Country and promoting the rights of the Taungurung Nation. I hope to see you all out on Country soon.

*Ni-aagii,*  
(Take care)



Kaley Nicholson

# CEO Report

**Another active and productive financial year has passed at TLaWC, which has also seen a range of changes to the organisation's operations and forms of engagement with the Taungurung Nation.**

An organisational realignment was conducted in January to enhance TLaWC's ways of working and build clearer channels of communication across teams. All change comes with a sense of uncertainty, but staff supported each other throughout the process and the results have demonstrated the strong workplace culture that continues to drive achievements for Taungurung people and Country. The Executive Leadership team now consists of three proud Taungurung people, with my role as CEO complimented by Bonnie Cavanagh as Chief Operating Officer (COO) and Matthew Shanks as Executive Manager of Biocultural Landscapes. The Management Team has also expanded to include managers across the organisation, with bi-monthly workshops held to review policies, discuss projects and ensure any decisions have input from all functions of TLaWC. The collaboration, communication and accountability within these forums paves a clear path forward for organisation.

Staff numbers remained stable following previous years of substantial growth, allowing teams to consolidate programs and utilise expertise from within. Events and new initiatives were held to boost staff involvement and wellbeing, including the International Women's Day workshop (a men's workshop will follow) and staff days led by specific teams to enhance the appreciation and understanding of all that is achieved at TLaWC. The staff satisfaction survey again saw strong results in support of TLaWC's workplace culture and organisational realignment, highlighting the positive perception of the organisation from those working hard every day to support the Taungurung Nation.

A media campaign was established in our fight for the Rubicon River following an attempt by Rubicon Station Pty Ltd to dam and divert the water flows. Days before the campaign went live with an exclusive interview at Camp Jungai, the VCAT tribunal agreed with TLaWC that Goulburn Murray Water's decision to grant the licence to construct works was unlawful. While this fight is not over, the decision was a partial win and a donations page was created to fund the process. Advocating for Country to ensure the natural landscapes and waterways are healthy and preserved is an ongoing focus from the team, no matter the financial cost.

TLaWC is producing a comprehensive Engagement Strategy and Communication Plan for the Corop Wetlands Biocultural Waterscape program with the intention of creating a healthy and thriving cultural waterscape. This process is governed through right way decision-making founded on collaborative partnerships, partnering principles, and trusting and reciprocal relationships. The long-term approach enables the team to act together on cultural obligations to care for Country and ensure that all practices applied within the waterscape are consistent. This strategy will continue into the next financial year as the program builds momentum.

Despite the disappointment in the Referendum result, the path to Treaty was clear. As the Taungurung representative on the First People's Assembly of Victoria, my role is to represent the interests of the Taungurung community to ensure our goals and hopes for the future are clear in all decision-making circumstances.

Building programs for connection, progressive yarns and future planning was a focus. TLaWC has been analysing how we engage with our membership to provide a space for online connectivity that is Taungurung-only. The Taungurung Community Portal was launched at the end of 2023 to centralise member communication and provide methods of direct interaction with both the organisation and mob. Another fantastic initiative was the launch of Wayilak Bayubarring, the Taungurung youth advisory group. Having a voice for the younger generations of Taungurung people, our future leaders, was a vital step and is now seeing regular meetings to progress youth-aligned projects. Nyagaroon yarning circles were frequent to ensure the planning process incorporates community ideas and viewpoints at a significant and special location, while wawa biik continues to provide cultural education through a tourism lens for all people interested in learning more about Country and culture.

Financially, TLaWC recorded a surplus for the year despite the weakening economic conditions affecting us all. Our funding was comprised of

many individual agreements that each require managing, reporting and administering, as well as delivering on the funded outcomes. Recently implemented funding agreements have shown a noticeable trend in shorter funding terms. This change makes it increasingly difficult to undertake longer term planning with any certainty, and places further pressure on TLaWC's ongoing financial health and sustainability. The ongoing lack of adequate core operational funding for TLaWC further adds to this pressure. TLaWC continues to strongly advocate for improvements to our funding situation through many different channels, while applying responsible governance and management practices appropriate to the current conditions. Throughout the financial challenges, there are many talented and passionate people guiding TLaWC along this path.

Thank you to the TLaWC Board of Directors, Executive Leadership Team, Management Team and all staff for their commitment in making a difference to the lives and lands of the Taungurung people.

*Ngun Godjin.*  
(Regards)



Matt Burns



# 2023-24 Highlights



## WAYILAK BAYUBARRING LAUNCH

The official launch of Wayilak Bayubarring – the Taungurung Youth Advisory Group – was held on August 4 2023 at TLaWC’s Broadford Office. The event commenced with a Welcome and Smoking Ceremony, followed by an introduction to the group through traditional song and dance. Heartfelt speeches highlighted the passion and commitment of the group, with the heavy rain a backdrop to their progression as leaders of the future. More about Wayilak Bayubarring can be found on page 16.

## ORGANISATIONAL REALIGNMENT

In an exciting announcement to begin the new year, TLaWC implemented an organisational realignment that saw refinement to the overall structure and ways of working. These changes were focused on clearer channels of communication and connection, with relevant team structure coming together to best support the Taungurung Nation. The positive and progressive culture at TLaWC continues to provide opportunities for growth as an organisation, viewing this realignment as the next step in best supporting all teams and individuals to achieve their goals. After a lengthy process and assistance from external expertise, the realignment was focused on improved governance, greater financial sustainability, preparation for further growth and enhanced capacity to progress key Taungurung objectives. The transition process ran smoothly across the first half of 2024.

## PORTAL LAUNCH

In October 2023, TLaWC launched the Taungurung Community Portal to enhance direct engagement with the Taungurung community. The Portal operates as a private webpage for Taungurung people only, with access to the latest news, events and achievements alongside a historical lens on culture, Country and language. A component of the 21-25 Strategic Plan was to improve connectivity with community, and the Portal provides the foundations for online interactivity to ensure ongoing sharing from members as well as the organisation. With features such as a noticeboard, live map and a socials wall, the Portal provides the ideal base for all announcements and engagement.

## FIGHTING FOR TAUNGURUNG COUNTRY

TLaWC successfully challenged a licence that would have permitted the damming and diversion of the Rubicon River. This river is of deep cultural significance to Taungurung people, history, Ancestors and the inherent obligation to care for Taungurung Country. At a Preliminary Hearing at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT), TLaWC challenged the legality of plans by Rubicon Station Pty Ltd to divert the Rubicon River by almost 600 metres through a private property near Rubicon to power a small-scale private hydroelectric plant.

On behalf of TLaWC, lawyers from public interest legal group Environmental Justice Australia (EJA) argued at VCAT in early June that the licence granted by Goulburn Murray Water (GMW) for the scheme was unlawful. On June 20, the VCAT tribunal agreed with TLaWC that Goulburn Murray Water’s decision to grant the licence to construct works was unlawful. TLaWC had also argued the licence would deviate the river, and that the water authority did not have the power to do this. But the tribunal did not accept this argument. The tribunal set aside the licence to construct the work and sent it back to the decision-maker for reconsideration in accordance with the Water Act.

The VCAT decision is a partial win, because the works cannot proceed lawfully until the decision-maker considers all licence applications. But this may not be the end of the matter. It remains open to the decision-maker to reconsider the matter and issue new licences. TLaWC continues to insist that no licences for these works and diversion should be issued, maintaining that these actions would seriously compromise the environmental and cultural values of this waterway.



# ADVOCACY *and* ENABLEMENT Department

Delivering a range of corporate and community services and programs, the Advocacy and Enablement department is the organisation's engine room that enables each work area to focus on their core business activities, goals and priorities.

- Advocacy and Engagement
- Corporate Enablement
- wawa biik

## ADVOCACY + ENGAGEMENT

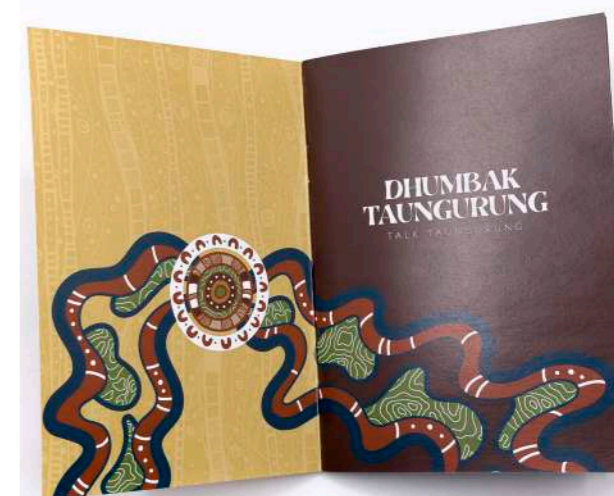
The Advocacy and Engagement team progresses a range of exciting opportunities for the Taungurung community to enable meaningful cultural and spiritual connection, acting as the conduit between TLaWC's operations and the guidance provided by the Taungurung community. Supporting the organisation's Community Advisory Groups has been crucial in advancing key projects and activities that strive to meet the priorities and expectations of the Taungurung Nation. Following the organisational realignment, the team moved from Community and Culture into the new area of Advocacy and Engagement. Along with hosting the monthly Dhum Gaab morning tea across both the Broadford and Alexandra offices, the team has led a range of events and worked toward the reclamation of cultural practices through traditions such as language and dance.

## ELDERS ADVISORY GROUP (EAG)

The Elders Advisory Group (EAG) was established to provide guidance, wisdom and support to TLaWC and the Taungurung community. The EAG focuses on key cultural, social and community matters, ensuring the preservation and promotion of Taungurung traditions and heritage. Two Cultural Leads provide a direct link between TLaWC and the EAG to ensure a clear flow of communication regarding organisational changes and opportunities for involvement, such as cultural education, ceremony or events. The last financial year has seen TLaWC host four meetings that invite staff from across all areas of TLaWC to update Elders on current projects, requesting input and expertise on advisory decision making.

## LANGUAGE REFERENCE GROUP (LRG)

The Language Reference Group (LRG) is a key committee within TLaWC that provides support to other departments seeking to enhance their use of language by introducing words into the reports, publications and presentations. The LRG is frequently asked to provide translations for welcomes and acknowledgements and confirm names for plants and places. A service is also provided to the wider community, with requests regularly received from landowners, companies, educational institutions and councils for approval to use Taungurung words. Guest speakers were invited to address LRG meetings, providing an opportunity to gain a better understanding of cultural matters and the interrelationship with language. This included representatives from Geographic Placenames Victoria, DEECA and universities, presenting valuable information to support LRG knowledge and members in their role of informing and disseminating language. A major milestone was the publication of the Dhumbak Taungurung phrase booklet, which is an addition to the growing range of language resources available to all people interested in learning more about the Taungurung language.



*The Dhumbak Taungurung booklet is available for purchase online or in TLaWC offices. All TLaWC Members receive one free copy.*

# Events



## NAIDOC WEEK | 2-9 JULY

TLaWC hosted the annual NAIDOC Week celebrations with the theme For Our Elders. The week included a flag raising ceremony at both offices followed by an Elders Luncheon at Broadford Bowls Club. Goranwarrabul House was the base of engagement with the community, with a Welcome and Smoking Ceremony performed by Uncle Shane Monk and Auntie Joanne Honeysett, followed by the Annual NAIDOC Parade to Kings Park.



## GATHERING OF THE MOBS | 10-12 NOVEMBER

The Gathering of the Mobs event was held at Camp Jungai, hosted by VACCHO and the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations with support from TLaWC. The camp was open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria to immerse in culture, heal spirit, yarn and celebrate with mob – focused on overcoming the Referendum result. The weekend consisted of yarning circles, basket weaving, spear throwing, ceremonial dancing, ochre painting and inspiring performances.



## BAGUNGA BA WIRRPMA CAMP | 1-3 DECEMBER

The Taungurung Natural Resource Agreement (NRA) Plain Language Guide (PLG) launched in December 2023 during a weekend at Camp Jungai. The camp provided information on sustainable gather and use practices when spending time out on Country, issuing community with their NRA Traditional Owner Rights Holder cards. The cards serve as a form of identification when exercising cultural rights on Taungurung Country. The weekend was full of cultural activities and PLG presentations.



## DHUM GAAB | FIRST FRIDAY OF EVERY MONTH

Dhum Gaab (Yarn Up!) is a community morning tea held on the first Friday of every month. The event alternates between the Broadford and Alexandra offices and encourages a chance to yarn and connect with community and TLaWC staff. The 'tools down' hour is also an opportunity to invite external businesses and representatives to attend informally to build relationships with the Taungurung community.



## GORANWARRABUL HOUSE

Goranwarrabul House has been a trusted community gathering place for well over a decade, providing culturally appropriate services, resources and information for the local Aboriginal community. Led by an Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Officer, the House focuses on improving health and wellbeing outcomes and enables access to specialist services such as an optometrist, dentist, fortnightly foodbank, and an alternating Women's and Men's Group. Focused on strategic objectives under the well-being and safety strategy, Korin Korin Balit Djak, the House supports the broader community – particularly celebrated for the NAIDOC march and event held in Seymour for NAIDOC Week each year. This year's event, a celebration of Elders, saw record numbers join the march, host stalls and engage with community.



## LGBTQIA+ COMMITTEE

An LGBTQIA+ committee was formed at TLaWC and commenced in April 2024. The staff-driven committee has eight members and is a network for employees who identify as LGBTQIA+ and allies, with an LGBTQIA+ Champion advocating on behalf of the committee and staff. Monthly meetings are held during the review of TLaWC policies and procedures to ensure inclusion of all LGBTQIA+ staff.

Achieving the Rainbow Tick Accreditation will be a focus to ensure a safe and inclusive workplace for the LGBTQIA+ community. The process will include a number of audits internally to demonstrate a friendly, inviting, inclusive and affirming environment. Once the foundations are set and the accreditation is reached, the plan is to then work with Taungurung community to implement similar policies, procedures and gatherings of the LGBTQIA+ community across Taungurung Country.

## WAYILAK BAYUBARRING

The official launch of Wayilak Bayubarring - the Taungurung Youth Advisory Group – was held on Friday August 4 2023 at TLaWC's Broadford Office.

Two Wayilak Bayubarring members represented TLaWC at the Koorie Youth Summit as delegates, hosted by Koorie Youth Council (KYC) in Melbourne. This was a 3-day conference with participants from across Victoria, offering a dedicated space for connection, growth and empowerment. This year's focus was on outcomes and advocacy for the future of community. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from prominent First Nations leaders and advocates, shaping the path forward for

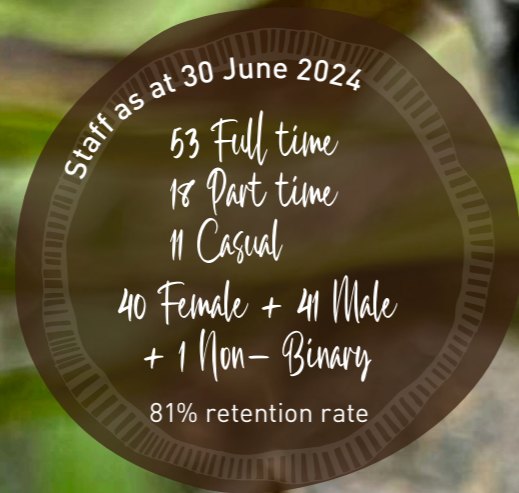


## KOORIE CURRICULUM CLUSTERS - REGISTERED ABORIGINAL PARTY PROJECT

The Koorie Curriculum Clusters project ('the project') was funded in response to a Rural and Regional Review's key Panel recommendation - to boost engagement, inclusion, and the education and wellbeing outcomes of Koorie students. This is through establishing partnerships between clusters of similarly geographically situated schools and local communities. The project supports teachers to become more confident and capable in teaching Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures, and perspectives across the Victorian Curriculum. This is done by developing guidance and quality curriculum resources that showcase local Victorian Aboriginal stories and knowledge in partnership with Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs). The project will engage six schools on Taungurung Country over a period of three years and run in two overlapping phases, commencing engagement in July 2023 (Phase 1). TLaWC is currently working with three schools on Taungurung Country – Euroa Primary, Euroa Secondary and Rubicon Outdoor Education. Two meetings are held per semester together with all three schools to discuss current projects and opportunities for collaboration. Principals and teachers from each school attended a wawa biik tour in Euroa to assist with a mindset shift to demonstrate that anywhere can be a classroom, embedding perspectives that can contribute to positive engagement, education and the wellbeing of Traditional Owner students.

young mob. Additionally, KYC will provide delegates with enriching cultural and social programs that celebrate resilience. While searching for grants and opportunities to assist Wayilak Bayubarring's growth and self-determination, the 'VicHealth – Strong Mobs' funding met requirements to help strengthen and foster cultural knowledge through dance and traditional song. Success was notified in May 2024, and the grant will cover ten Wayilak Bayubarring members in their learning of cultural dance, song and adornment-making to then launch in 2025.

# CORPORATE Enablement



## PEOPLE AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

The People and Workplace Culture team focused on enhancing safety and wellbeing initiatives across the financial year. This was assisted through the information received from the staff satisfaction survey, which is now an annual process that provides the opportunity to understand workplace satisfaction and seek feedback on the perception of change within the organisation. The most expansive project was the organisational realignment, despite most roles remaining the same in requirements. Ensuring all staff had support services and avenues of discussion was a cornerstone of the announcement process.

In recruitment, various leadership positions were replaced or filled for the first time following the realignment. The recruitment process continues to be strengthened alongside the onboarding process for new staff, which now includes updated induction content. Providing new starters with a wide range of resources ensures they feel comfortable from day one in their roles, understanding the purpose and operations of the organisation.

A new policy review process has been established to better collaborate with managers, unpacking policies in bi-monthly leadership workshops following a period of analysis. Safe and respectful workplace training is delivered internally to provide all staff with a foundation of knowledge relevant to working in a Traditional Owner organisation, best supporting the positive TLaWC culture and acknowledging general historical workplace incompetence in identifying/resolving issues. TLaWC's People and Workplace Culture team continues to engage regularly with counterparts at other TO organisations to build relationships and discuss best practice in human resourcing, safety and wellbeing options.

## FINANCE

The Finance team provides in-depth financial analysis and support across TLaWC to effectively manage the organisation's resources and risks. There has been a clear focus on adapting, refining and improving processes over the past 18 months, which involves building partnerships with all teams, understanding their needs, and collaborating to continuously improve the way

TLaWC works as an organisation. This has led to changes in the way TLaWC engages in some types of work and changes in the management of investment funds. Undertaking this work has placed TLaWC in a strong position to respond to ongoing changes in the regulatory environment and the challenges expected to come in the short term due to the broader economic outlook. At the governance level, Finance staff have provided Daada Gurnap Nhilam and the Board of Directors with a range of information and resources to support decision making now and into the future. The Finance team has also been involved in ongoing advocacy work to improve TLaWC's funding situation, as well as providing support to the many projects and initiatives throughout the year.

## COMMUNICATION

The Communications team worked collaboratively with all staff across TLaWC to ensure achievements, stories and organisational updates were projected internally and externally to demonstrate ongoing growth and positive change. Social media continued to increase in reach and diversify in audience, with the core platforms of Instagram, LinkedIn and Facebook seeing high levels of engagement and a further example of self-determination in practice. The Community Portal was created for the Taungurung community, led by the Communications team and supported by a Portal Working Group. This site was built from the ground up, utilising Taungurung art and knowledge to create a visually appealing and culturally safe space for all members to keep informed with the latest news, events and stories. The team provided ongoing support to wawa biik in its online presence, advertising ventures and media engagement, distributing monthly newsletters dedicated to the cultural experiences business (TLaWC's newsletters are sent quarterly to 1000+ subscribers). The media campaign in the fight for the Rubicon River was a critical project, working with Environmental Justice Australia (EJA) to build a clear narrative when responding to journalist enquiries in best representing TLaWC's position across a range of prominent publications. A key aspect of Communications at TLaWC is ensuring all external facing content is consistent, accurate and aligned to the organisation's brand. In an ever-growing organisation, this is a challenge that has been met through the relationships formed with other teams.



wawa biik is the Taungurung cultural experiences business of TLaWC. Having launched in February 2023, the business continues to deliver guided educational visitor experiences to diverse audiences with consistently high visitor satisfaction. The greatest testament to success is that the team loves the work they do in sharing cultural stories on Country and forging strong relationships to support the aspirations of the Taungurung Nation.

An unprecedented flood event at Tahbilk resulted in major tweaking of the cultural experiences. Looking after Country and making sure cultural experiences are designed and delivered in collaboration with the seasonal variations and unpredictability of Country is essential. Celebrating cultural values and advocating for cultural-led management of Country has always been at the heart of wawa biik's experiences and stories shared, and this year had great engagement and feedback from visitors.



wawa biik  
(hello Country)



## FROM JULY 2023-JULY 2024

<b>35</b>	Operated cultural experiences – private groups and public tours
<b>441</b>	Guests welcomed onto Taungurung Country
<b>105</b>	Post-tour surveys received
<b>90%</b>	Net Promotor Score (the percentage of customers that would highly recommend our experiences to others)
<b>600</b>	Instagram followers
<b>17</b>	Shared new stories about Culture, Community and Country through the wawa biik website

## TESTIMONIALS

*“This was not only a great team building event for our executive team but a fantastic learning experience for us as well. This was a 10 out of 10 for me” – Geoff*

*“It was an excellent experience. Aunty Jo and Jonah were excellent communicators and hosts with a wealth of knowledge. The structure of the day was well planned and interesting. From the smoking welcome to country to the walk and the delicious morning tea, to the boat ride it was all a real treat” – Rochelle*

*“The experience exceeded my expectations. The presenters were very knowledgeable, authentic and approachable. They covered a wide range of topics and gave us first-hand experiences” – Vanessa*

## PARTNERSHIPS

Ongoing partnerships with Tahbilk Winery and Euroa Arboretum enable many engaging experiences and strong relationships between wawa biik and visitors. Thanks to Cath Olive (and the Arb team) and Holly (and Tahbilk team) for their continued partnership in wawa biik's second year of operations. A new partner was welcomed in 2024 - Go Adventure Nagambie – in providing their 12-seater boat for private cruises on the waring (Goulburn) river. A connection was built with Dwayne Bannon-Harrison, a Yuin-Ngarrugu descendant engaged as a mentor through the First Nations Tourism Mentor Program. Many repeat visitors have been welcomed too, with organisations such as Murrindindi Shire Council, Greater City of Bendigo and ARTC Inland Rail filling tours with their staff. These continued partnerships build advocacy and support for the Taungurung Nation.

The wawa biik team enjoyed many learning days and activities, including a visit to Gunditjmarra Country for a guided tour of Budj Bim – a Cultural Landscape inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Connecting with other First Nations mobs and supporting each other in economic ventures is an important focus.



## BRANDING AND GROWTH

- wawa biik contracted Luminaire Pictures to create an advertisement that summarised the wawa biik story and purpose.
- Taungurung photographer Hunter Callaghan also captured images for the wawa biik website and marketing collateral.
- Catriona Rowntree and her film crew from Country House Hunters attended a wawa biik experience as part of their Broadford episode on Channel 9. Thanks to Mitchell Shire Council for supporting this opportunity to grow awareness of wawa biik and Taungurung culture through a national audience.
- A new cultural experience was launched in January called wawa Euroa Wayilak for young people aged 6-12 years to engage with culture during school holidays. This is a shorter version of the wawa Euroa experience with hands-on activities including an art class. One of the participants attending with her son and grandchild provided a glowing write-up in the Euroa Gazette.

## LOOKING AHEAD

wawa biik has secured its reputation as a respected and much-loved cultural experiences operator and will continue to evolve with the Taungurung community. The team will now focus on the eco-tourism certification and strategically growing the business. A core aim is to increase awareness of wawa biik and create opportunities for everyone living, working or visiting Taungurung Country to experience Taungurung culture on a wawa biik experience.

For more details, visit [www.wawabiik.com.au](http://www.wawabiik.com.au) or reach out to [hello@wawabiik.com.au](mailto:hello@wawabiik.com.au) to secure a private group booking or make an enquiry.



**“You'll always have an Aunty on Country”**  
– Aunty Joanne Honeysett, Taungurung Elder and wawa biik Cultural Guide.

# BIOCULTURAL *Landscapes*

The Biocultural Landscapes Department (BLD) was established in January 2024 as part of TLaWC's organisational realignment.

This united four teams that collaborated infrequently in a more formal and considered way:

- Cultural Land Management (CLM) team
- Biik Land Management
- Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) team; and
- Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) team.

One new team was also established to support the re-emergence of Taungurung knowledges at TLaWC: the Biocultural Knowledge Emergence (BKE) team. The realignment was an opportunity to reset the collaboration points between teams and to strengthen the work achieved for and with Taungurung community.



# CULTURAL LAND Management



The Cultural Land Management (CLM) team's main priorities have been focused on strategic planning, staffing and recruitment, and a range of exciting major initiatives. The Taungurung CLM Strategy frames the direction of the work being undertaken by the team. The four strategic pillars of the strategy are Healing Knowledge, Healing Country, Managing Country and Governing with Country. This has established the framework through which the CLM team set objectives and measure outcomes according to Taungurung Cultural Values.

Staffing and recruitment are progressed through acquiring and managing grants from several funding sources, with capacity maintained for all program areas. The team is currently in the process of further developing the Cultural Forests program in response to rapid changes underway across the state. As well as ongoing community engagement and project work, CLM has established several major projects. This includes setting up collaborative management pilots that are centred on Cultural Landscapes, and further developing a Reading Country Program to provide a foundation in practice for culturally informed planning and land management.

The vision of the CLM team is that Country and people are healing. The inherent rights and interests of Taungurung people in Country will be enabled and activated. Thanks is extended to all members of the Taungurung Nation on Country who have walked this path with the team.

**The Cultural Land Management Strategy informs all work through four key strategy areas.**



## HEALING KNOWLEDGE

Healing, strengthening and reconnecting cultural knowledge, knowledge holders and knowledge transfer systems.



## HEALING COUNTRY

Supporting the healing, adaptation and application of CLM practices.



## MANAGING COUNTRY

Supporting the planning and management of Country by leveraging existing frameworks, policies and strategies to create opportunities for the Taungurung community.



## GOVERNING WITH COUNTRY

Seeking the structural reform and co-capacity needed to establish enduring governance arrangements that embed Taungurung rights and interests in land and water management.

## CULTURAL WATER PROGRAM

Continued growth in the Baan Ganalina: (Guardians of Water) membership and an ongoing program of on-Country events is strengthening the role of community in the development and delivery of the Cultural Water Program. This has included the refinement of cultural waterway assessment methods and integration with broader Reading Country efforts. This is clear in the application at places of significance such the Corop and Waring waterscapes and Hughes Creek; an ongoing program of knowledge hand-back and two-way learning activities with ecological specialists, and ongoing participation in policy processes to further Taungurung water rights and objectives. Healing Country activities have been carried out within the Waring waterscape in locations including Horseshoe Lagoon, Molesworth Billabongs and Splitzgerber, allowing for the sharing of knowledge between Baan Ganalina, Taungurung Rangers and Biik crew members (in partnership with Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority).

The Taungurung led Corop Cultural Waterscape program has entered its second phase (Feasibility) with significant milestones such as the endorsement by partners (DEECA, GBCMA, GVW, PV and others) of a Statement of Commitment and a 100-year vision. Collaborative governance, working groups and a Taungurung community-centred Reading Country program have been established to undertake analysis of biocultural values, engage with the local community and progress needed reforms at the state level to heal and care for the Corop waterscape.

## CULTURAL LANDSCAPES PROGRAM

The Corop wetlands complex has been identified by the Taungurung people as existing within an important cultural landscape which includes Reedy Lake and forested Country around Whroo. This has been named as the Corop Cultural Waterscape. TLaWC has now completed three co-design workshops with partners, making substantial progress in understanding the scope of the program, partnership roles, governance arrangements and the process of development required to support healing and caring for the Corop Cultural Waterscape (which has significant water dependant entities and energy flows). The collaborative governance group has been named in Taungurung: *Baanhbil yanggurdi gadhaba* - "walkabout together with water". This work will make a broad contribution to in developing pathways for resourcing and the alignment of policy, plans and procedures to create the conditions for success. Partners have been involved in the co-design process that has now concluded with the development of artefacts to support governance and planning. The partnership will now embark on Phase 2: Feasibility, assessing and analysing the biocultural, institutional and socio-economic aspects of cultural waterscape development, allowing the governance group to decide on how to proceed. Phase 3 will involve management planning for the cultural landscape, providing an important example of self-determination in action that will bring significant public benefit, demonstrating the value of the cultural landscape approach to solving complex landscape rehabilitation challenges in a multi-tenure environment.

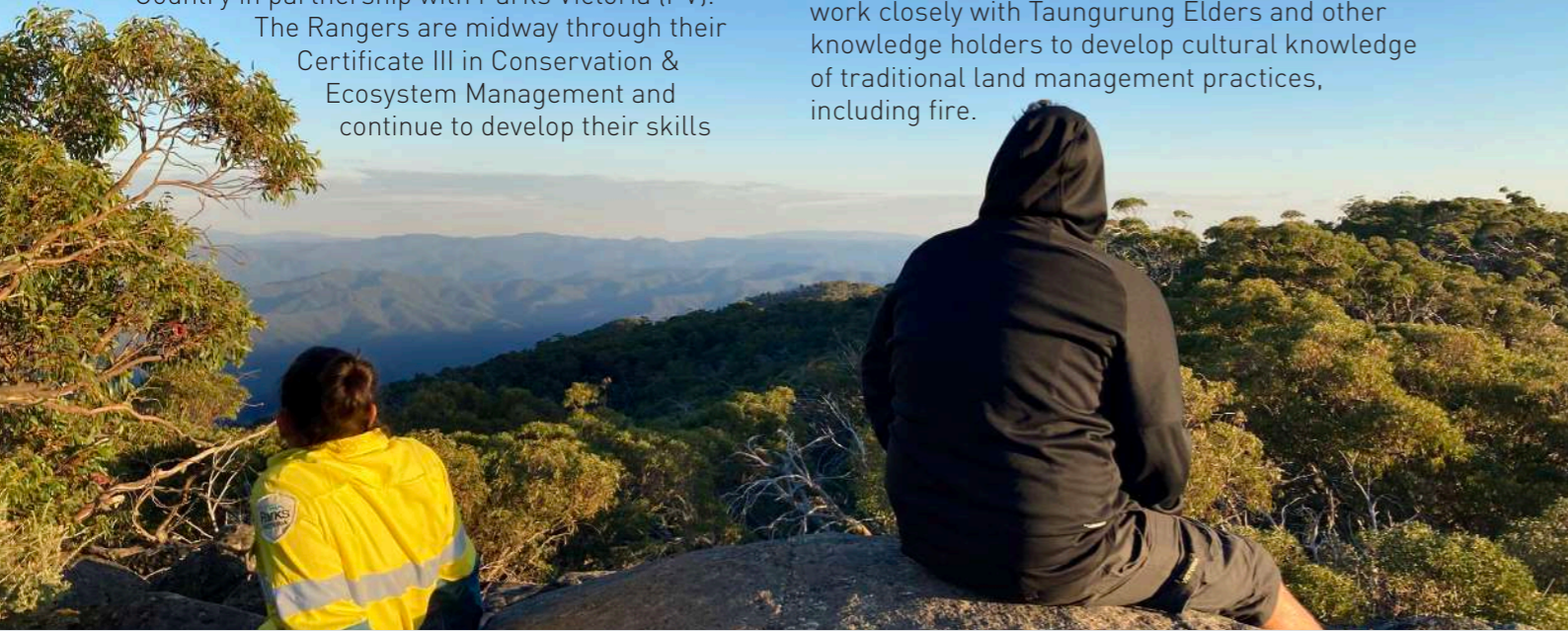


## TAUNGURUNG PARKS PROGRAM

The Taungurung Parks Program has been established to oversee the delivery of two important programs that are enabled through the Taungurung Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA): the Taungurung Parks Ranger Program (TPRP) and the Taungurung Traditional Owner Land Management Board (TOLMB). After successful recruitment, five Taungurung Parks Rangers are actively caring for Taungurung Country in partnership with Parks Victoria (PV).

The Rangers are midway through their Certificate III in Conservation & Ecosystem Management and continue to develop their skills

and qualifications via PV training (4WD, chainsaw and first aid). Taungurung Parks Rangers work across the parks and reserves of the Upper Goulburn Area, undertaking park services works and maintaining campgrounds. The team works with various Taungurung knowledge groups and TLaWC staff to develop culturally informed and community-led land management plans for less visited but culturally significant reserves such as Gooram Falls and Horseshoe Lagoon, also undertaking land management duties. Rangers work closely with Taungurung Elders and other knowledge holders to develop cultural knowledge of traditional land management practices, including fire.



## CULTURAL FIRE PROGRAM

The Cultural Fire Program includes the development of a strategy to guide knowledge healing, practice development and the identification of landscapes and places of cultural and environmental priority to apply Cultural Fire. The newly formed 'Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle' had its inaugural meeting, with members yarning about the cultural application of fire to Taungurung Country. A 'Traditional Owner-led burn' is planned for the grasslands on the east side of Mt Piper, scheduled for autumn 2025, with the aim to keep the grasslands open and in healthy condition.

A fire training event was held with Cath Olive from the Euroa Arboretum to discuss how fire can be applied to maintain healthy Country. Members viewed sites where fire has been used to promote the diversity of the bush and to control weeds. A site scheduled as a 'Traditional Owner-led burn' was also inspected in the Alexandra Bushland Reserve, scheduled to be burnt in late 2024. A second event enabled 20 Taungurung people to be accredited with the 'Basic Wildfire Awareness' ticket, which is required by the government for community to attend burns within the Forest Fire Management and Country Fire Authority systems.



## CULTURAL FOREST MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

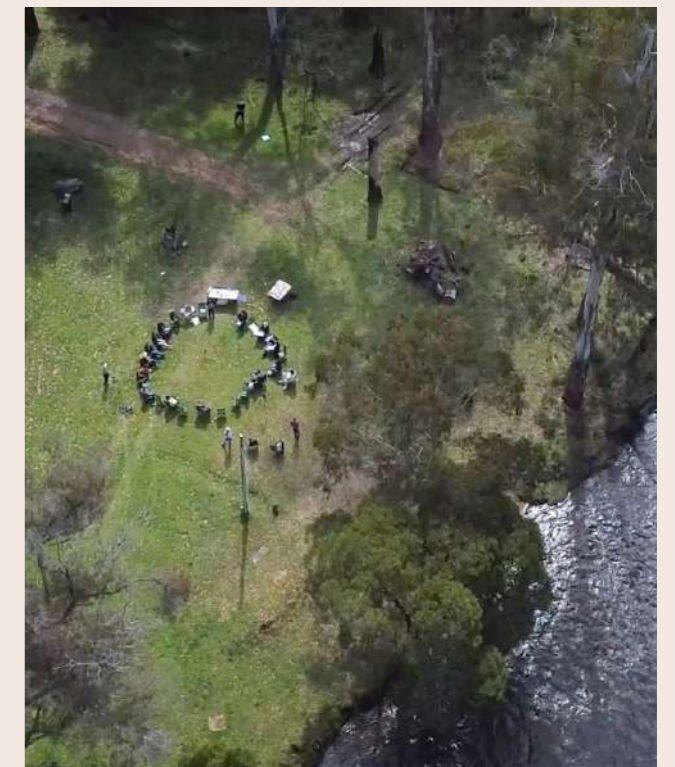
This year saw the inception and growth of the Taungurung Cultural Forests Program (CFP). The CFP seeks to enact the rights and interests of the Taungurung Nation across the forest landscapes of Taungurung Country, both on public and private land tenures. This is being achieved through a combination of strategic action in the policy and advocacy space through the development of co-designed Reading Country tools and on-ground assessment of forested Cultural Landscapes. Key achievements of the program include the delivery of the ground-breaking 'Rapid Biocultural Assessment' of the Central Highlands forests, the development and testing of a 'Taungurung Forest Assessment' tool (including a collaborative summer program of field testing by Biik), the development of a framework to define and identify 'Taungurung Country Types', and the formation of the Taungurung Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle. On Country assessments with community were key to the success of CFP achievements in the past 12 months. This has allowed the building and strengthening of critical relationships between the CFP and the Taungurung community alongside a growing understanding of the challenges and opportunities present across the diverse forested landscapes that comprise Taungurung Country.

## PRIVATE LAND DEVELOPMENT

The Private Land Acquisition and Development team has facilitated the coordination of a DEECA-funded research project, probing the question of whether current legal regimes and nature-based markets are adequate to manage Country in a culturally appropriate manner. The team has also facilitated several yarning circles for Taungurung Elders and community members to come together with TLaWC staff and content experts to share their perspectives, experiences, and objectives for the Nyagaroon property. The team collaborated with the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) to find a pathway for approvals that allow using and developing infrastructure at Nyagaroon in a way that is consistent with the vision of Taungurung community. DTP has recommended pathway of clause 52.30 for early phases of the project. This milestone signifies a crucial step forward in our efforts to develop Nyagaroon into a culturally safe and inclusive space that celebrates Taungurung culture and traditions. Work to develop the Cheshunt property is underway and, as with Nyagaroon and Garden range properties, the team has overseen ongoing management needs, including routine maintenance and environmental restoration works.

## PRIVATE LAND ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

CLM recruited a Program Coordinator of Private Land Acquisition and Management to deliver cultural objectives through property management planning on Taungurung-owned land within broader cultural landscapes. Since recruitment, the Program Coordinator has produced a comprehensive 'Options Paper' to aid the structured exploration, analysis and decision-making process for the development of Cheshunt. Cheshunt is a small acreage property that TLaWC owns in the Upper King Valley. The Options Paper ensures that a range of potential options are considered, stakeholders are engaged, and future management plans will be based on thorough analysis and consultation. Following the transfer of Nyagaroon, the team has continued planning and place-making alongside community. The final Yarning Circles culminated in a vision for development at the property. The team spent most of year working with the State on processes regarding planning schemes to enable the community-prescribed works to be undertaken.



# BIOCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE Emergence



## BIOCULTURAL DIVERSITY

The Biocultural Diversity program has progressed multiple Reading Country community events across Cultural Landscapes to support Taungurung-led management planning and knowledge healing. These events bring together community members, TLaWC staff and knowledge specialists on Taungurung Country. Events support knowledge sharing, progress Taungurung research priorities (including Culturally Identified Species objectives) and have supported Taungurung community speaking for Country across several Cultural Landscapes by walking, listening and yarning.

## PARTNERSHIPS

Several important partnerships have been integral to the progression of core projects, including work with the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action's (DEECA) Biodiversity Division to develop Taungurung rights and interests on Country. The commencement of engagement with the Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environment Histories and Futures (CIEFH) saw TLaWC connect with Melbourne University, led by Professor Michael Fletcher (Wiradjuri). This process included a presentation at a Taungurung Reading Country event at Mount Buffalo, which is the start of a 7-year partnership that aims to develop a Taungurung Biocultural Research Paradigm to support understandings of biocultural systems past, present and future. This work will underpin a strategic approach to revealing the biocultural expressions of Country (essential expressions of knowing, being and doing) to enable Taungurung-led futures. Primary goals of TLaWC's participation in the CIEFH are to provide meaningful opportunities for Taungurung people to engage in Taungurung-led practice, and to design research outputs that meaningfully support knowledge healing and communication with the Taungurung Nation.

## PROJECTS

- **Mount Buffalo Biocultural Assessment & Reading Country Celebration:** The team led several events at Mount Buffalo with input from the wider department to progress understandings and support knowledge handback for this important Taungurung Cultural Landscape. This includes extensive Cultural Heritage survey work, Forest Assessments, vegetation surveys and Deberra (Bogong Moth) monitoring.
- **Rapid Biocultural Assessment of the Central Highlands:** Methodological development and support for Central Highlands Reading Country events focused on speaking for Country in the Central Highlands through the Rapid Biocultural Assessment. This work registered Taungurung community voice and values to enable speaking for Forest Country, which will assist future management.
- **Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle:** Out of the Central Highlands works came an emergent Taungurung Knowledge Circle named the Forest and Fire Knowledge Group. The Biocultural Diversity program area has supported methodological development and support for progressing this cultural governance group and has enabled more community time on Country, learning and yarning Forest and Fire.
- **Elders Knowledge Healing Focus Group:** Biocultural Knowledge Emergence (BKE) has been supporting the Elders Advisory Group think about how knowledge healing should be undertaken with the Nation, through a focus group established to workshop these matters and provide culturally informed advice. The working group will establish ways for Protecting Knowledge, Maintaining Knowledges, Living Knowledges and Healing Knowledges.





# REGISTERED ABORIGINAL Party

The Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) team fulfils and manages TLaWC obligations as a RAP under the Aboriginal Heritage Act (AHA) 2006. This ensures that Taungurung cultural heritage values are protected and that TLaWC's statutory obligations as a RAP apply best practice principles in the interests of the Taungurung people.

## COMPLIANCE

Compliance activities over the reporting period included responding to potential noncompliance with the AHA. There was a total of 21 compliance investigations in this financial year, with 13 still considered open compliance investigations. The compliance space continues to pose challenges due to the need for First Peoples State Relations (FPSR) to provide training and a trained officer to the Hume region. Two staff have now attended the first training week to become Aboriginal Heritage Officers (AHOs). The second session is in September for completion in Cert IV Government (Investigations). In the interim, the staff have worked hard to create a newly organised space in Compliance, with enforceable conditions for all CHMPs.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE FIELDWORK

During 23-24, there were seven FSOs deployed per day on CHMP and internal TLaWC projects. Related projects included CHMP field assessment and archaeological salvage. In summary, the gross turnover from TLaWC RAP is up 20% (resulting from FSO deployment).

Quarter	Time Range 2023-2024	Working days	Ave. No of staff deployed	Ave. No of staff per day
Q1	Jul - Sep 23	64	441	7
Q2	Oct - Dec 23	60	339	6
Q3	Jan - Mar 24	60	495	8
Q4	Apr - Jun 24	61	451	7
Total	Jul 2023 - Jun 2024	245	1,726	7

## CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN (CHMP) APPROVALS

CHMPs are being approved within statutory timeframes. CHMPs and CHPs are now following a TLaWC-set template with TLaWC-set conditions, contingencies, Taungurung-led cultural inductions, and plans. Terms and conditions contracts are now being sent with CHMP bookings, ensuring security for TLaWC RAP with all CHMP works.

Quarter	Financial Quarter 2023/24	CHMPs	CHPs
Q1	Jul - Sep 2023	9	0
Q2	Oct - Dec 2023	5	1
Q3	Jan - Mar 2024	2	2
Q4	Apr - Jun 2024	7	2

## PROJECTS

### EARLY STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

The RAP team continues to engage in Early Strategic Engagement meetings and Letters of Advice (Due Diligence Assessments) for external parties. There were 13 Early Engagement meetings and 5 subsequent Letters of Advice within the financial year. These meetings are opportunities for developers, councils, government agencies, and other private businesses to seek TLaWC RAP Unit advice on planned development projects. The meetings and Letters of Advice are chargeable and provide an alternative entry point for consultation – proactively – before the development or activity triggers a CHMP or CHP. This leads to improved protections of Taungurung Cultural Heritage over any late-stage engagement.

### Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreements (ACHLMAs)

ACHLMAs set the responses, workplans and cost rates for TLaWC with a particular external party, allowing for cohesive and consistent responses to archaeological heritage threats and activities covered by AHA 2006. The RAP Unit has been progressing 2 ACHLMAs:

- ACHLMA with GBCMA has been renewed. It has been extended to cover all TLaWC RAP and all GBCMA works on named waterways.
- The team is also collaborating with DEECA for an ACHLMA to replace current CHP processes around Strategic Fuel Breaks

### PARTNERSHIPS

#### External - TLaWC and DEECA

TLaWC and DEECA embarked on or continued a range of important projects on Taungurung Country:

#### Box Ironbark Flood Recovery

TLaWC was successful in acquiring a large one-year DEECA-funded project to survey and assess Box Ironbark Country in the Corop area. The team is working to design a comprehensive survey plan and reporting framework for this unassessed area. Additionally, the team hopes to develop an internal methodology for Reading Country for Cultural Heritage values and will collaborate closely with the CLM team in delivery of these surveys as a contribution to the wider Corop Cultural waterscape project.

### Strategic Fuel Breaks Project

The current system of ad hoc permitting will be replaced by an ACHLMA. The team is working on this ACHLMA with DEECA, with CHPs and CHMPs revised to now have a standard set of conditions and contingencies. The team has rolled over the surveying money to the next financial year and have 25 days of surveying allocated to the Strategic Fuel Breaks project.

### Preliminary Site Registrations

Preliminary site registrations are still a high priority. The team is seeking direct funding from FPSR to clear a list of preliminary sites and investigate better ways to consider preliminary site registrations to improve the way the team assesses Country.

### Crown Water Frontages

This grant was renewed for the 2023-2024 year to assess the CWF sites for risks and heritage. The RAP team has now completed surveying all sites. The reporting for this grant is finalised, and the metrics and assessment frameworks under this project formed the basis of the work for the Box Ironbark survey plan.

### Internal – RAP and CLM

The RAP team has collaborated with the CLM team and the RAP team to finalise a report on the survey work at Mt Buffalo. Work undertaken on the surveys of Mt McLeod and The Horn formed the basis of a report that members of the RAP team wrote. The team is also working to design a field survey of Waring Goulburn and are beginning to develop the strategy for recording the floodplain. There has been a focus on training and CMT registration plus flood zone areas, with the team working with Dr Jarrad Kowlessar to proactively survey and develop a strategy for assessing the flood zones across TLaWC RAP area.

### Educational Initiatives and training

The RAP team is planning a joint field school with La Trobe University (Dr Georgia Stannard) to survey and record and learn together in 2025 at Lake Eildon. The field school will work to deliver ANCATL skills passports in a two-way learning model with the Department of Archaeology and History. TLaWC will receive 100% of the fees charged to the students for attendance. There is hope to achieve more of this in future, encouraging the next generations of Archaeologists to be better informed.

# LAND USE ACTIVITY AGREEMENT LUAA

The Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) gives procedural rights to the Taungurung people regarding proposed activities on public land across Taungurung Country. The LUAA team has built processes which facilitate TLaWC's involvement and decision-making in future uses of public land.

39 Earth Resources Exploration and Retention Licences are administered, subject to the LUAA negotiating with 20 Exploration Licence holders and applicants. In addition, the team processes LUAA notifications from multiple land managers of public land on the Taungurung Estate, including DEECA, PV, Water Boards, Water Utilities, CMAs and local councils.

## **\$66,000 in Community benefits were achieved in the last financial year.**

In the last financial year, the team assessed 220 Advisory notifications and 40 Negotiation Type B notifications:

- Advisory Activity categorisation agreed – 194
- Advisory Activity categorisation disputed – 26
- 18 pre-works/post works site inspections undertaken.

Community benefits from Negotiation Type B activities will be calculated and confirmed with the signing of the Deed of Agreement, and funds are to be held in 'Trust pending reregistration of the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). The LUAA subcommittee meets every five weeks to approve negotiation activities and set the negotiation terms and comprises of three TLaWC Board Members.

## MAJOR MILESTONES

### TEMPLATE NEGOTIATION DEED

As a part of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA), a Template Negotiation Deed has been created for use by TLaWC for all negotiation matters where the State is the land manager. Land managers include DEECA, PV, DTP and others. TLaWC is satisfied that the template negotiations have concluded, with both parties agreeing to the terms and conditions. The Deed confirms the works that will take place, their timeline, and the amount of community benefits owed to the Taungurung people for the works undertaken on public land. The normal process for a Negotiation Type B activity includes a site inspection pre and post works. Two members of the LUAA team are accompanied by two Traditional Owners (with gender balance) to the site where measurement of the impact on public land and Traditional Owner rights are recorded for negotiations.



### EXPLORATION LICENCE FEES

The role of granting exploration, retention and mining licences falls on a state agency known as Earth Resources. When an exploration licence application is granted by the State (Earth Resources Department) over public land on Taungurung Country, the licence applicant must negotiate and come to an agreement with TLaWC for access to the land to have the application approved. Once an agreement is reached, the licence applicant must pay yearly fees to TLaWC for continuing access to the land. A recent audit of charges resulted in a recommendation from legal advisors to increase the fees TLaWC charges for both access and works on land. The increase in fees brings our charges up to the level realised by Traditional Owners in other parts of Australia.

### DISPUTE RESOLUTION

The Land Use Activity Agreement is a complex document. TLaWC and the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) were unable to arrive at a negotiated agreement in regard to categorisation of all activities undertaken as a part of the Joint Fuel Management Program (JFMP). Subsequently, a formal dispute notice was lodged by TLaWC in late 2022. A panel of four barristers, two appointed by DEECA and two appointed by TLaWC, was formed to interpret the LUAA question and to provide a report with the panel's findings to both parties. In April 2024, the Dispute Resolution Panel handed down a report that stated TLaWC were correct in the interpretation of the Land Use Activity Agreement and its application to the Joint Fuel Management Program. TLaWC and DEECA have committed to the formation of a Dispute Resolution working group to mutually agree on the categorisation of all activities in the JFMP notifications.

### AGREEMENT DEFINITIONS

**The Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) –** The LUAA gives procedural rights to the Taungurung people regarding proposed activities on public land.

**The Natural Resource Agreement (NRA) –** The NRA provides for Taungurung people to carry out agreed activities, including to take, use and manage natural resources on public land, consistent with sustainability principles.

**Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) –** The Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA) binds all the agreements together and formalises these agreements as a native title agreement. This allowed the Taungurung settlement package to be formally registered under the Native Title Act.

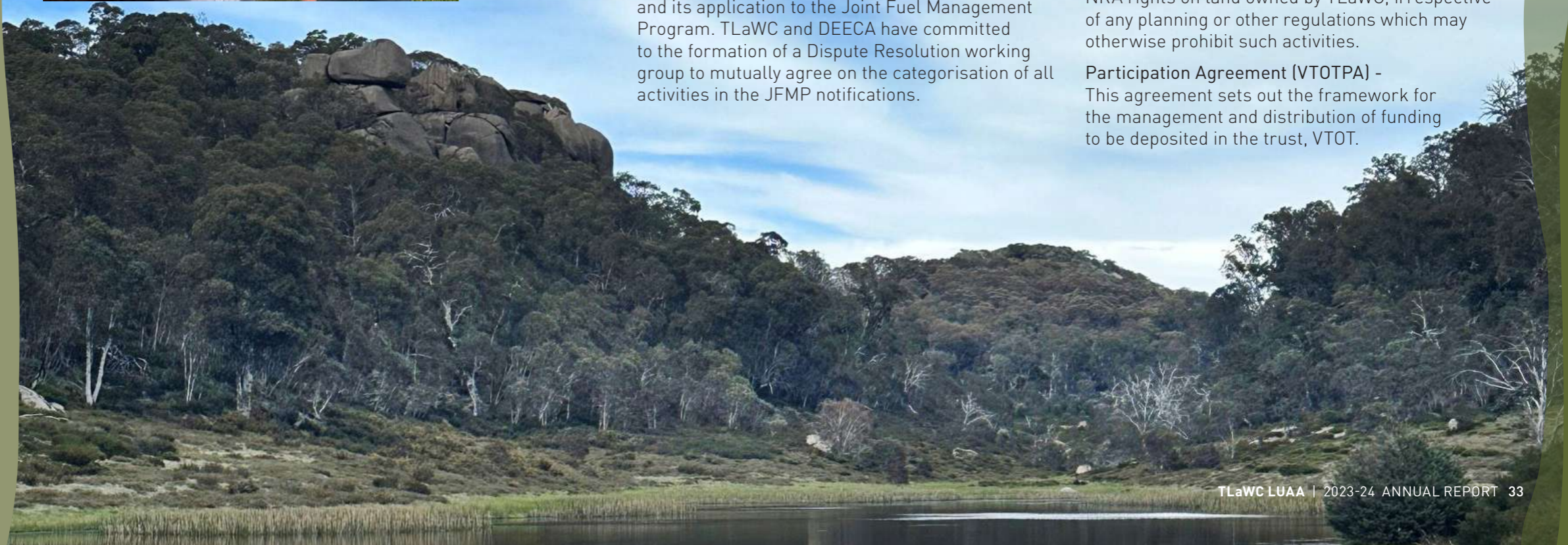
**Land Agreement –** This agreement provides a mechanism for transfer to TLaWC of national parks and reserves as Aboriginal title and any Crown land the State has agreed to transfer as freehold.

**Funding Agreement –** The State provides TLaWC with a range of funding which includes core operations funding, once-off interim capacity funding and economic development funding.

**Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement (TOLMA) –** This Agreement provides for the setup of the joint management and governance structure for the Aboriginal Title parks and reserves.

**Traditional Owner Land Natural Resource Agreement (TOLNRA) –** The TOLNRA allows for Taungurung community members to exercise their NRA rights on land owned by TLaWC, irrespective of any planning or other regulations which may otherwise prohibit such activities.

**Participation Agreement (VTOTPA) –** This agreement sets out the framework for the management and distribution of funding to be deposited in the trust, VTOT.





## FLOOD RECOVERY

A key focus this year was to implement flood recovery activities across Taungurung Country. The team planted 900 plants at the Knowsley site as part of the revegetation program to address bank stability issues caused by the flood event of October 2022. The purpose of this work is to increase native vegetation in the riparian zone and to stabilise the banks to mitigate further erosion. 1,160 plants were incorporated into flood recovery activities at Molesworth and Cheshunt. Biodegradable guards were used to protect ground cover and mid-story trees. Plants were selected to promote ground cover diversity along the stream's edge, with benefits for bank stability and survival if the site is inundated in future. All plant selection is Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC) appropriate and complementary to the native species already present at Cheshunt.

Biik Land Management's goal is to collaborate with the Taungurung community to heal and revitalise Taungurung Country, recognising and honouring the intrinsic connection between people, place and landscape. Biik staff have planned and delivered more than 100 projects during the 23-24 financial year. These ranged from small weeding and planting jobs to large scale rehabilitation works, all of which help to heal Country.

Biik crew operated across three work centres on Country this season – Broadford, Alexandra and the co-location depot with Parks Victoria, Whitfield. During the peak delivery period, the Biik team was comprised of 17 staff and turned over more than \$1.2 million in project value across Taungurung Country. Staff attended training in first aid, chemical handling, tractor and front-end loader operations, cultural competency, corporate essentials and informal local inductions.

A range of projects highlight the various locations, projects and partners that have been an ongoing focus in Biik's growth as a business.

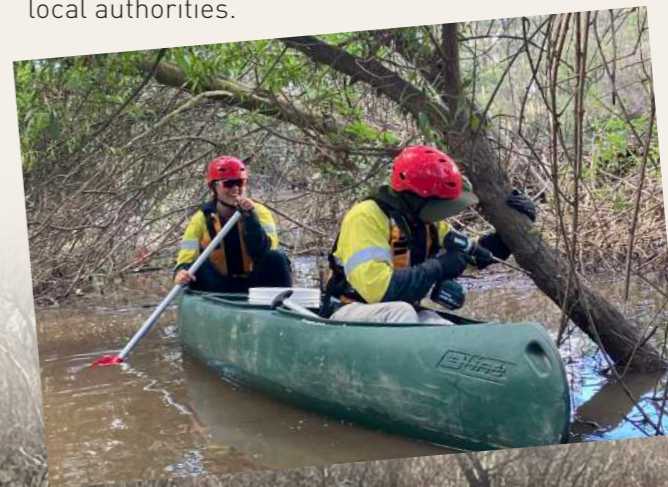


## PARTNERSHIPS & PROJECTS ON COUNTRY

There were a variety of healing and reading Country activities implemented at Hughes Creek – an identified Taungurung culturally significant landscape for biocultural values. Following a partnership project between TLaWC and the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), Biik commenced a project to deliver habitat improvement at Hughes Creek Hill Bushland Reserve. Given the significant location, Biik has been preparing to engage Taungurung community as part of the project delivery. The planned ecological methods involve creation of survey data capturing hollow-bearing trees to map their profile across the reserve, then installation of nest boxes at appropriate locations across the site to monitor their use by local fauna in the future.

Through partnership with the GBCMA, Biik continues to deliver a wide variety of activities to care for Country at Reedy Lake (Nagambie) including bird surveys, nocturnal mammal surveys and tree hollow surveys. Biik crew and the Taungurung Park Rangers partnered to Care for Country, under the guidance and support of Baan Ganalina. Biik crew installed carp exclusion fences to observe the effect of excluding carp and water birds in wet areas and land mammals from dry areas on wetland vegetation. The exclusion of feeding pressure may become a pilot example to demonstrate methods in which TLaWC and Biik can heal Country and promote the natural recruitment of sensitive wetland species of vegetation.

Biik was proud to take part in the construction and ongoing maintenance works of the Gawarn Baring Track at Trawool, engaged by Goulburn Valley Water (GVW) in 2022 to carry out the treatment of the area for blackberries and other invasive species. This has continued improving the site for the use of the public, now and into the future. The collaboration has delivered a positive impact on the walking track by protecting and caring for the landscape and waterway health using Taungurung land management practices. Another project with GVW saw the delivery of post silviculture harvesting windrow burning at the Seymour water management facility. The site was approximately 100 hectares in size and most recently was utilised for a blue gum silviculture plantation. Biik crew had the opportunity to learn how fuel moisture, prevailing weather, wind and lighting patterns influence and interact with fire. Crew practiced operating heavy machinery to assist with manual handling of heavy fuels such as stumps. When delivering fire practices, the team must ensure compliance with relevant laws, regulations and permits. The local CFA was invited to participate to keep their crews skilled and help build a working relationship between TLaWC and local authorities.



# ECONOMIC Development

TLaWC initiated a dedicated Economic Development team within the organisation during the organisational realignment. The purpose of the Economic Development team is to take an overarching strategic approach to economic development to support a growing range of activities in this field, and to provide consistency in business planning and development to those activities which are already occurring. TLaWC has plans to grow and develop the Economic Development team into the future to strengthen the economic foundations of TLaWC and to support the goals, responsibilities and aspirations of the Taungurung Nation.

TLaWC has explored a variety of different economic opportunities since the beginning of the current strategic plan, aligning with the Taungurung Nation's priorities for Culture, Community and Country.

Some of the areas explored are already flourishing into business opportunities:

- Developing a Natural Resource Management (NRM) services business, which is now Biik Land Management – working towards culturally guided management of Country
- Developing Taungurung-centred cultural Tourism experiences which are now operated as wawa biik and are well renowned across Victoria

Other projects are areas which have not yet matured into such visible activities, but through which significant progress occurred, include:

- Equipping the organisation to take best advantage of sustainable energy opportunities including in solar, hydro and wind
- Exploring opportunities to develop cultural and business hubs in different locations across Taungurung Country
- Developing planning and expertise to participate in housing developments

All activities have supported the growth and development of TLaWC, with each area of investigation undertaken as a stand-alone project prompted by priorities and opportunities.

## TAUNGURUNG – LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

With 15 Councils operating on Taungurung Country, TLaWC instigated a new initiative titled 'The Taungurung – Local Government Forum' to bring together all 15 Local Governments and relevant parts of the State Government to discuss and develop areas of related interest and responsibility. The interests of TLaWC and Local Governments overlap through many Acts and Agreements which are relevant to both groups – like the Aboriginal Heritage Act and the Taungurung Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) – as well as goals to build vibrant, connected and healthy communities. Together, the forum can more efficiently and effectively progress areas of mutual interest and learn from each other, rather than repeating processes 15 times. TLaWC is excited about the potential achievements of this forum.

## TAUNGURUNG YILAM PLAN

**Yilam is the Taungurung word for camp, hut, house or home.**

TLaWC has been developing a housing plan, undertaking community consultation and housing industry research to consider the role that the organisation can play in developing and delivering projects relating to housing and place-making. This is also an opportunity act as a bridge for Mob to access existing relevant programs, supporting people to move back to Country and call Country home, and improving financial security for individuals, families and the corporation.

TLaWC is in the process of writing the Yilum (Home) Plan about housing and making places home. Priorities for the plan are to:

- Support Taungurung Community members to build happy and connected lives on Country
- Improve housing and financial security for Taungurung individuals and families, including supporting the growth of inter-generational wealth
- Building a strong and diversified financial base for TLaWC to respond to community needs long-term

This is a new area of work for TLaWC, which very few mobs have started working in – proven following discussions on progress with other Victorian TOCs. The journey will be shared to support others to walk this path as well.

# VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN STATEMENT

The following email was sent to all staff in May 2024 and posted to TLaWC's social media accounts as the organisation's stance on violence against women in society.

28\* Australian women have died at the hands of a male perpetrator this year. One woman every four days. By the time you are reading this, it is very likely more.

Violence against women is an issue in Australia. The government has pledged 1 billion dollars to help women leave violent relationships and drive other support systems. But as we know, money does not solve everything.

The crimes against women are vile, cruel and unfair. They are committed by people in society we may pass in the street, not those already contained. People often present in the lives of the victim.

TLaWC's culture is a primary reason for our high staff retention, consistent achievements, and working beyond capacity. Our position on any matter of violence or abuse is clear.

This organisation is full of strong and dedicated women; our friends and family. We all have special women in our lives; mothers, grandmothers, sisters, wives/partners, daughters and work colleagues.

We too have fathers, grandfathers, brothers, husbands/partners, sons and male work colleagues. Opportunities to educate and drive advocacy, to lead by example in action and conversation, to see that TLaWC's values of integrity, respect, leadership and safety are upheld at work and in life. For this organisation is also full of supportive and respectful men.

Our own values may be strong, but that is not enough. Speak up and speak loudly. There is zero tolerance at TLaWC for any form of sexism, bullying or racism. Our responsibility is to ensure that this organisation is the safest environment for every person that walks beneath the Taungurung flag and through those doors. Any support, assistance or education we can provide is a positive example to others on the path to a safer society for all women within our community and beyond.

The Employee Assistance Program (attached) is a strictly confidential service from an independent provider. This program is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. There is a network of counsellors who specialise in Aboriginal, LGBTIQ and family violence matters.

TLaWC employees can access up to 10 days of paid family and domestic violence leave in a 12-month period, which is detailed in the second attached policy. Employees who are experiencing family and domestic violence can take this paid leave if they need to take action to deal with the impact of family and domestic violence.

TLaWC is fully committed to supporting employees who are suffering or escaping from domestic violence and facilitating their continued participation in the workplace. Our People and Workplace Culture team is contactable to assist with the internal support services highlighted in this email.

\*number at the time of communication

# CORPORATE Governance

## ATTENDANCE TABLE

DIRECTOR	Attended	Eligible
Kaley Nicholson	6	7
Isobel Morphy-Walsh	4	7
Marcus Stewart	7	7
Alex Burns	4	7
Jarrold Hughes	2	4
Lorraine Padgham	5	7
Jacqui Stewart	7	7
Patsy Smith	5	6
Grant Hansen	1	3

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Kaley Nicholson**  
Chair

As Chairperson of the TLaWC Board of Directors, Kaley is committed to delivering the best possible outcomes for the Taungurung nation.

She is passionate about caring for Country, employment, and education – seeing these pillars as the key to strengthening the position of Traditional Owners, while advancing the cultural rights and economic development of Taungurung people.

Kaley is focused on ensuring that Elders are respected and elevated in decision making, that young people are empowered and have a voice, and that there are opportunities in place for future generations.



**Isobel Morphy-Walsh**  
Deputy Chair

Isobel is a proud Taungurung woman who loves her land, her culture and community. She has a strong voice and always looks out for Elders,

children, women and Country. Isobel has placed protecting, promoting and healing Victorian countries, peoples and languages into every part of her life.



**Aunty Loraine Padgham**  
Director

Lorraine is a member of the Nira ballug clan and has a commitment to preserve and honour her Taungurung heritage. Loraine's objective as

a Board member is to continue TLaWC's work in promoting cultural heritage and language, and to promote a better understanding and appreciation by the wider community for the rich legacy forged by those who occupied and cared for the land through the millennia.



**Grant Hansen**  
Director

As well as having provided leadership to the Board for several years, Grant is a musician, actor, radio presenter, and television host. He fronted

the popular NITV/SBS television program, The Marngrook Footy Show and has a long background of productive involvement in Aboriginal affairs.



**Aunty Patsy Smith**  
Director

Patsy is one of our longest serving Board members and has spent more than ten years as a member of the TLaWC Board. Patsy is an accomplished

creative artist, photographer and sculptor, and has participated in many art installations and community events, as well as being the founding director of Baluk Arts. Patsy has contributed greatly to TLaWC over many years.



**Alex Burns**  
Director

Alex is a proud Taungurung man who works in the corporate world and brings strong skills to the Board. He has expertise in business planning, risk

management, and corporate practice.



**Aunty Jacqui Stewart**  
Director

Jacqui is a Taungurung Elder and has extensive experience delivering welcomes to Country and participating in cultural consultations. Jacqui enjoys

taking part in cultural and community activities and has participated in the annual Kulin Nation's *Tanderrum* event. She has a strong background of involvement as an Aboriginal Elder for the Koori Court.



**Marcus Stewart**  
Director

Marcus Stewart is a Nira illim bulluk man of the Taungurung Nation. He is a seasoned negotiator and strategist and has held several senior

management positions. He has helped implement a number of strategies and policies through senior roles in State Government and as a previous TLaWC CEO. His broad understanding of politics, policy and the challenges facing Traditional Owners gives Marcus the ability to lead and be a voice of change. He believes Traditional Owners should be at the forefront of the decision-making process for self-determination and achieving economic independence.



**Jarrold Hughes**  
Director

Jarrold is motivated to support TLaWC to become both strong and sustainable in relation to its economic position, governance structures and organisational

capacity so that it can fulfill the social and cultural needs of its membership.

# ORGANISATION *structure*

## EXECUTIVE STAFF



**Matthew Burns**  
CEO

Matthew Burns is the CEO of the Taungurung Land & Waters Council (TLaWC) and a proud Taungurung man. He is elected reserved seat member for Taungurung Land & Waters Council on the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria, the body which operates as the voice for Aboriginal communities across the state, representing them in the next phase of the Treaty process.



**Bonnie Cavanagh**  
Chief Operating Officer

Bonnie is the Chief Operating Officer of TLaWC and Executive Manager of the Advocacy & Enablement Department, with lifelong ties to Taungurung Country and the Broadford community. As a Taungurung woman, Bonnie is proud to not only strongly represent her mob, but to support their aspirations and build an exciting future for the Taungurung Nation.



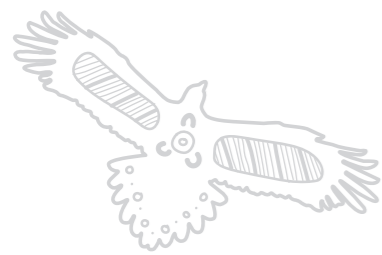
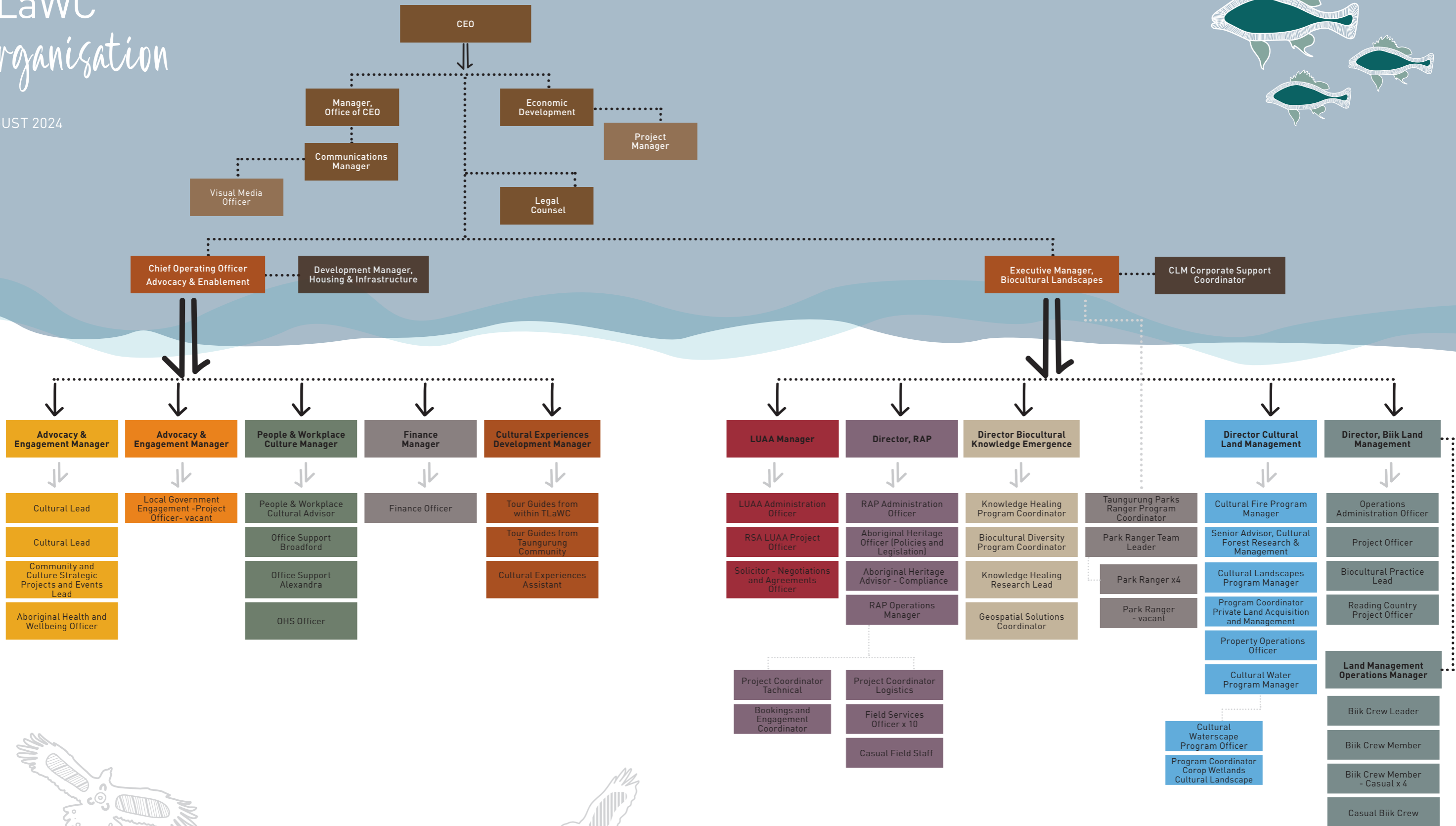
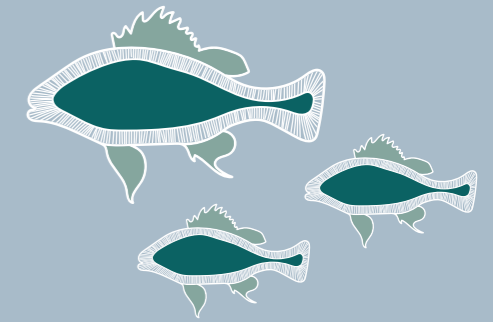
**Matthew Shanks**  
Executive Manager  
- Biocultural Landscapes

Matthew brings strong skills in cross-cultural environmental management and policy advocacy. Throughout his career, he's worked to support Traditional Owners across Victoria negotiate with Government to activate their rights to heal and care for Country through the delivery of several Traditional Owner led policies and strategies with progressive reform agendas.



# TLaWC Organisation

AUGUST 2024





## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Aboriginal Heritage Act (AHA 2006)

Aboriginal Heritage Officers (AHOs)

Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS)

Australian National Committee for Archaeology Teaching and Learning (ANCATL)

Australian National University (ANU)

Baan Ganalina (Guardians of Water)

Biik (Country)

Biocultural Knowledge Emergence (BKE)

Biocultural Landscapes Department (BLD)

Bushfire Recovery Victoria (BRV)

Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environment Histories and Futures (CIEFH)

Community and Culture Advisory Group (CCAG)

Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMP)

Cultural Heritage Permits (CHP)

Cultural Land Management (CLM)

Culturally Significant Species Plan (CSSP)

Cultural Values Assessments (CVA)

Daada Gurnap Nhilam (Careful danger)

Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA)

Department of Jobs Precincts and Regions (DJPR)

Department of Justice and Community Safety (DJCS)

Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)

Dhum Gaab (Yarn Up)

Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)

Environmental Justice Australia (EJA)

Elders Advisory Group (EAG)

First Peoples - State Relations (FPSR)

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA)

Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP)

Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC)

Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA)

Joint Fuel Management Program (JFMP)

Koorie Youth Council (KYC)

Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA)

Language Reference Group (LRG)

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)

Natural Resource Agreement (NRA)

North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA)

Notice of Intents (NOIs)

Participation Agreement (VTOTPA)

Plain Language Guide (PLG)

Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA)

Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP)

Strategic Fire Breaks (SFB)

Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC)

Taungurung Cultural Forests Program (CFP)

Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC)

Traditional Owner Corporation Caucus (TOCC)

Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement (TOLMA)

Traditional Owner Land Management Board (TOLMB)

Traditional Owner Land Natural Resource Agreement (TOLNRA)

Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH)

Victorian Great Outdoors (VGA)

Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy (VTOCLS)

Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal (VCAT)

wawa biik (Hello Country)

Yananyin gadhaba (We Walk Together)

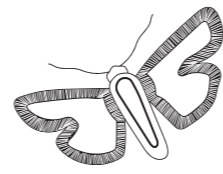
Yiyaga ba Wongarra (See and Know)



## PARTNERS

TLaWC's connections with partner organisations is vital to the growth of the Taungurung Nation. Their advocacy, reach and areas of expertise provide us with opportunities to target new audiences, open employment pathways, and build relationships that can influence change in our communities.

Thank you to the following:



Ngun Godjin

