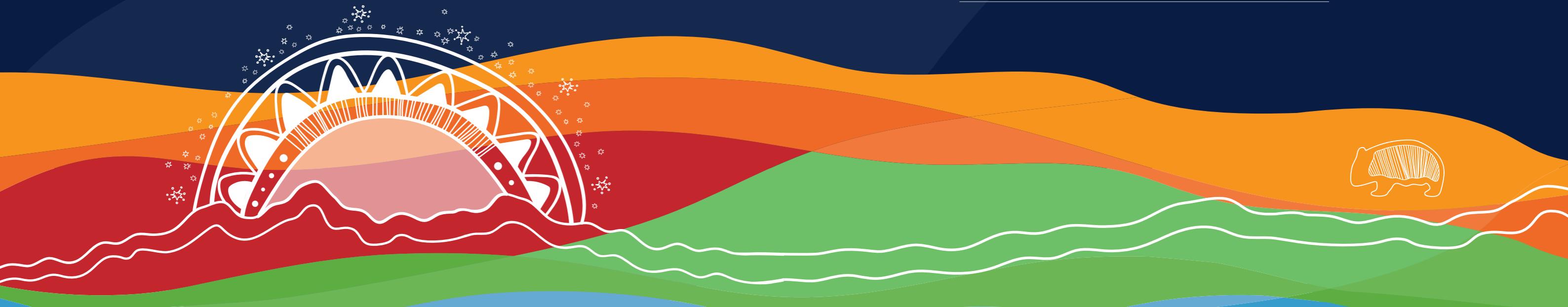
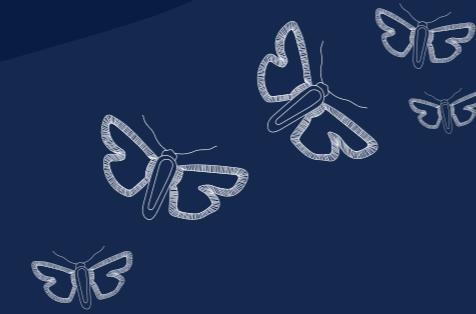
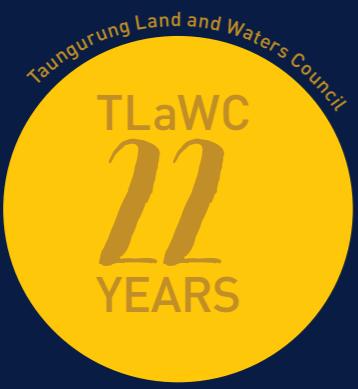




Taungurung Land and Waters Council
Annual Report 2024–2025



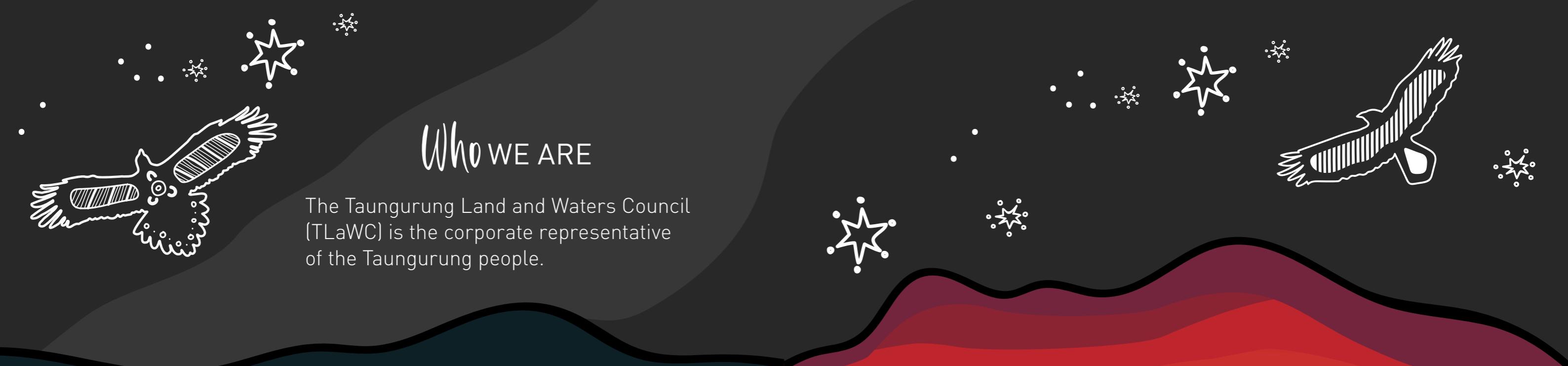


Special thanks to photos: Simon Birch, Chris Sutton, Alex Watson, Mel Young, Jason Laverty, Jess Slapp, Ryan Markwick, Fern Hames, Jen Grindrod, Clay Law, Dan Young.

Art by Maddi Moser. Design by Mazart Communications.

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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



Vision

TLaWC is the voice of the Taungurung people – a people with a strong sense of shared identity, self-determining in the management of Country and culture

Ambition

With the guidance of community, we are rebuilding the Taungurung Nation

Values

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

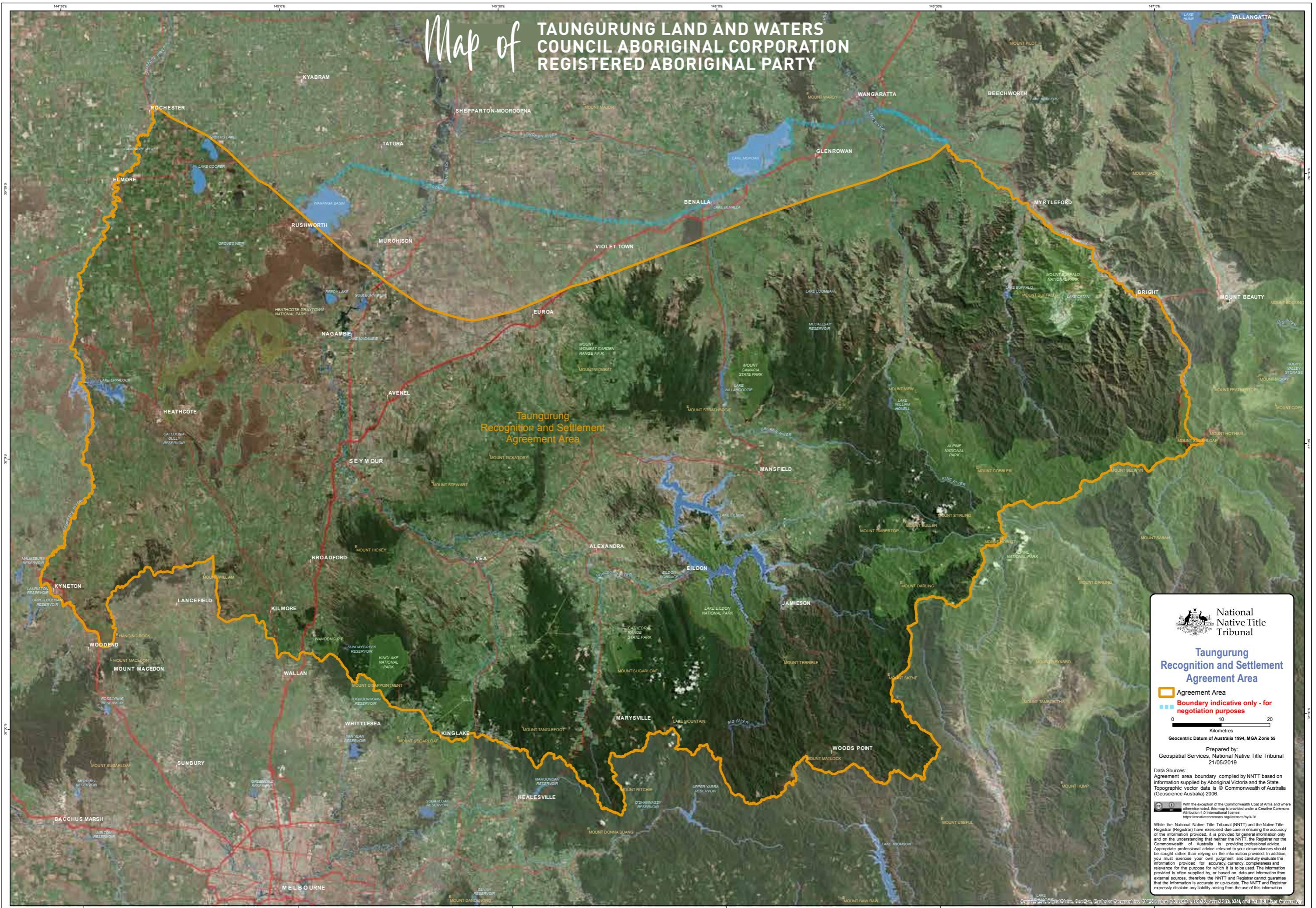
Building our economic independence

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



CHAIRPERSON Report

As Chairperson of the Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC), I am pleased to present the 2024/2025 Annual Report. This report is a showcase of TLaWC's achievements, successes, growth, projects and people. Each page honours Taungurung culture, community and Country with a focus on supporting the Taungurung Nation now and into the future.

As you scroll through the many detailed pages of this Annual Report, TLaWC's brand shines bright. This brand was created from the art of Maddi Moser, a proud Taungurung woman whose artistic works feature across Taungurung Country and beyond. The 24/25 edition is the fifth Annual Report inspired by Maddi's art and will also be the last following the end of a five-year agreement. I would like to thank Maddi for assisting in TLaWC's first branding suite. The next Strategic Plan, launching in 2026, will showcase art from another Taungurung person and we can't wait to share this with you all.

In January, TLaWC commenced a Treaty election process to replace Matt Burns as Taungurung Treaty Representative to the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. Matt's commitments as TLaWC CEO saw him step down from the role, opening an opportunity for another Taungurung person to lead the community's voice in the Treaty space. I was deeply honoured to be voted in by the mob and I do not take this responsibility

lightly as we embark on a new journey together. I will continue to do my very best to represent our people with strength, integrity and commitment as we work towards a statewide Treaty that delivers justice and self-determination for our Nation.

The launch of a new camp format (Berrgan) to replace previous Quarterly Meetings was a focus across the financial year, emphasising coming together on Country for full weekends at Camp Jungai. The first camp saw record numbers of Taungurung people spending time learning, listening and engaging in cultural activities. Each camp promoted a theme to ensure a unique approach to each weekend, including musical performances from Radical Son and Blackfire during camp two. Three camps were held by the mid-point of 2025 and have been successful in refreshing the way TLaWC connects with community.

Language revitalisation has remained a priority through the ongoing work of the Language Reference Group (LRG). Thank you to Aunty Loraine Padgham for her role in leading the LRG so passionately with the help of Professor Barry Blake and Taungurung people interested in progressing the accuracy, growth and reach of the Taungurung language. Aunt stepped down from the Board this year but her legacy will remain to the benefit of future generations. I'd also like to thank

Grant Hansen for his time on the TLaWC Board. Grant chose to leave the Board earlier in the year due to other roles, but his time and commitment in the Director role is greatly appreciated. With the cited changes on the Board, a number of positions are now vacant and recruitment will occur at the next AGM. We encourage all Taungurung people to review the requirements and apply if eager to lead and make a difference to the Nation through good governance.

The Walk for Truth was a trek from Portland to Parliament to build awareness for the Yoorrook Justice Commission's final report. This call to action acknowledged the past as we walked towards a shared and equitable future. While this was a Victorian-wide event, the presence and strength of the Taungurung people was special. A Taungurung message stick, hand crafted by Matt Shanks, was presented to the Premier on the final day, and Uncle Mick Harding performed a song. Walking with a proud contingent of mob holding the Taungurung flag was a powerful statement in a year that has seen many ups and downs in the political space.

There have been countless positives across the financial year and so many opportunities for our people to feel proud to be Taungurung.

Unfortunately, there were also some sad times too. We lost a very special Taungurung person, Aunty Jean Williamson who passed in late 2024 aged 97. Aunty Jean was a Taungurung Elder renowned for her involvement in the early growth of TCAC, working passionately alongside other Taungurung Elders to build the foundations that stand strong today. The passing of Aunty Jean was a deep loss for the Taungurung community, and her passion will live on in our work for the Taungurung Nation.

Finally, I'd like to say 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 people. I hope to see you all out on Country soon.

*Ni-aagii,
(Take care)*



Kaley Nicholson





CEO Report

TLaWC's progress through its first full financial year in a realigned organisation has seen a range of exciting projects lead the way forward despite the external challenges presented to First Nations people.

Last year, TLaWC reported on the changes to ways of working that would benefit channels of communication between teams and balanced workloads to achieve best results for the Taungurung Nation. The structure has now settled into a rhythm that has produced the many successes viewed in this Annual Report. The Executive Leadership team (Bonnie Cavanagh, Matthew Shanks and I) expanded by one with the addition of Kristie Norton, Chief Financial Officer. TLaWC continues to manage its financial resources responsibly to ensure the ongoing sustainability of the organisation, as we prepare for a new phase of delivery against a refreshed strategic plan.

The Taungurung people have continued to work through the early steps in a native title process with the support of an experienced legal team and with the intention of lodging a Taungurung peoples native title claim. The Dhudhuroa, Waywurru and Ngurai Illam (DWNII) claim, which was made in the Federal Court in November 2023 and which covers approximately 50% of Taungurung Country, did not achieve registration through the National Native Title Tribunal process. However, this will now proceed through to the Federal Court in 2026. These native title matters are highly sensitive, highly emotive processes with the legal team focused on Ancestral lines, research and providing advice to the Taungurung people. TLaWC does not hold a formal role in the prospective Taungurung native title claim, however is playing a logistical

role which has included organising meetings, sending notifications to members and providing a presence in-person to ensure the Taungurung community has our full support.

The Local Government Forum (LGF) has grown through additional forums and engagement across Taungurung Country. A process was undertaken to elect a non-Taungurung Co-Chair from across the Local Councils, with the City of Greater Bendigo's Cr Andrea Metcalf voted in by other Mayors and CEOs. More on this important initiative can be found on the highlights page (page 12) as well as the return of cultural fire to Taungurung Country, turtle yilams and the launch of the Berrgan community camps.

The continuation of a policy that encourages dingo (yirrangan in Taungurung language) to be killed despite being listed as a threatened and protected species in Victoria saw TLaWC issue a media release citing our deep concerns. The Dingo Unprotection Order supports proactive killing of yirrangan – a culturally significant species to Taungurung people and Country. TLaWC advocates for the protection of yirrangan for a variety of reasons that include ecosystem balance and health at scale. This media release and strong stance was a display of the organisation's approach to caring for Country no matter the opposition, and the Taungurung viewpoint became a leading story in prominent Victorian publications.

wawa biik cultural experiences remains the best outlet for cultural education to partners, businesses, councils, schools and the wider community. Both public and private tours operating across multiple locations provide an insight into Taungurung culture, Country and the

journey of our people across generations. wawa biik partnered with Uncle Mick Harding and his sons for a new experience titled wawa Dharrang, which led participants through the scarred trees on the Great Victorian Rail Trail. The youth-focused school holiday experiences are also helping us provide culture to youth; inaccessible in our capacity before the launch of wawa biik in 2023. Education continues to be a focus and will only enhance through recent recruitment and emphasis on providing programs to younger audiences.

There are many areas to highlight in an extremely busy year, such as:

- Phase 2 of the Corop Wetlands Cultural Waterscape program, an opportunity to demonstrate a transformation in how we collectively know, understand, heal, care for and manage Country.
- Recommendations to the Eminent Panel for Community Engagement for the future of the Central Highlands forests through Taungurung-led Rapid Biocultural Assessment of the area.
- The Australian Research Council Center of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Future (CIEFH) program to understand the recent history and future of Australia under climate change. The partnership will enable TLaWC to support existing projects with specialist knowledge and, most importantly, support Taungurung people to shape research and progress their own tertiary pursuits.

- The launch of the new Taungurung Biik Yilam (On-Country Housing) Plan, highlighting the Taungurung communities' needs and interests in returning to Country as home, the challenges and opportunities relating to housing, and the role TLaWC should play.
- The Renewable Energy Policy, which will lead and facilitate benefit-sharing arising from energy initiatives on our Country
- Biik Land Management's breadth of works and partnerships across Taungurung Country

All projects play an important role in reading, healing and caring for Country to ensure our future generations have thriving lands and waters to enjoy. This Annual Report details all of these projects and more, demonstrating the team's ability to tackle countless projects in driving the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan.

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. I hope you enjoy reading this report.

Ngun Godjin
(Regards)




Matt Burns

2024-25 Highlights



CULTURAL FIRE

Taungurung community members returned good wiinj [fire] to Country at Mt Piper in Broadford, supported by TLaWC staff. This was the first time Taungurung people delivered wiinj to Biik as a community in more than 170 years. TLaWC's cultural fire team has spent two years planning for the burns, led by Taungurung cultural knowledge passed on by Ancestors. Following the testing of sites using Reading Country (traditional) methods on location, a site was chosen based on the right soil moisture and ratio of green to dead native grasses. This ensured the right wiinj was brought back to Country as part of the healing process.

Taungurung people in attendance were able to walk with wiinj, steering the flames and protecting particular patches and plants that were not to be burned. The fire generally burnt along very slowly and at a low intensity. Insects were seen moving away from the fire and able to find protection. The smoke was a white colour, gentle. All were focused on healing Country alongside education and safety. This burn was a day of learning. Community have noted the pride felt during the walk with wiinj, fulfilling obligations to Country and bringing all the hard work together to see more successful burns in the future. The historic event created a relaxing, peaceful and enjoyable day on Country for all community and staff involved.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM

The Taungurung Local Government Forum is an initiative aimed at fostering a constructive and meaningful partnership between TLaWC and Local Government. Established in March 2024, the Forum is the primary mechanism for Local Government engagement and partnership across all Councils on Taungurung Country. Its members include all CEOs and Mayors of Local Governments on Taungurung Country, along with representatives from First Peoples – State Relations, Local Government Victoria and the Municipal Association of Victoria. The aim of the Forum is to develop strong working relationships, to meet shared obligations under the key legislation and agreements, and to create a mechanism for exchanging information, sharing learnings, and coordinating resources to deliver positive outcomes for our communities and the region.

TLaWC and staff from local Councils are progressing key priority areas that have been identified by the group. This includes developing partnership agreements, developing cultural awareness strategies and tools, and improving processes and understanding around the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and the Taungurung Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA). The Forums are held bi-annually and are co-hosted by a different Council each time which allows us to feature different parts of Taungurung Country. Cr Andrea Metcalf (Mayor of City of Greater Bendigo) was elected as Co-Chair recently following a voting process.

BERRGAN COMMUNITY CAMPS

Taungurung people gathered on Country for the first of the new Community Camps in February, which replaced the previous Quarterly Meetings. Titled Berrgan, meaning 'altogether' in Taungurung language, the camps were focused on relaxation, connection and celebration with family and friends first and foremost. The opening weekend in February included Treaty discussions, cultural activities and a strong sense of togetherness. The camp saw the largest gathering of the Taungurung mob in years, fostering learning and connection. Following the success of camp 1, camp 2 used the same base and added entertainment in the form of musical performances by Blackfire, Radical Son and dance by the Taungurung Youth Group (Wayilak Bayubarring). Running themes at each of the first three camps has seen returning and new members attend, with more camps slated for 2025 at the time of writing.



TURTLE YILAM

Horseshoe Lagoon is a culturally important place for Taungurung people, ecologically regarded as the jewel in the crown of the Waring (Goulburn River). Ongoing efforts to care for the site by TLaWC and Baan Ganalina (Guardians of Water) in partnership with Goulburn Broken CMA and Parks Victoria has seen the return of all three inland species of turtle to the site, including the threatened Broadshell turtle. To encourage turtle breeding, TLaWC and Baan Ganalina, with support from Turtles Australia, initiated a project to construct floating habitat islands which will allow turtles to build nests in a location safe from predation by foxes.

The first turtle island was finished and launched in November 2024 at an event with representatives from all involved groups, as well as neighbouring landholders. Within days, turtles were observed and photographed using their island. A remote trail camera on the island provides clear imagery of the turtles nesting. This is a strong start to the initiative, and everyone has been surprised at how quickly the turtles have taken up residency. More turtle protection works and island installations are planned to ensure the three inland turtle species have the best opportunity to survive and thrive. In early 2025, after a range of animals such as snakes and birds picking through the yilam, baby turtles were captured on camera hatching and returning to water. While dangers lurk both on land and in water, they now have the best chance for survival thanks to the project. The turtle island project is supported by the Victorian Government's Icon Species Program 2023-2025.

ADVOCACY and ENABLEMENT Department

The Advocacy and Enablement department is a driver of organisational performance, providing structure, support and strategy to enable TLaWC's focus on delivery. Through a combination of corporate and community-facing functions, the department ensures the smooth operation of key internal systems while advancing Taungurung interests.

The department is structured across three key teams:

- Advocacy, Engagement and Partnerships – Building strong relationships with government, partners, and stakeholders to advocate for Taungurung priorities, support self-determination and amplify community voice.
- Corporate Enablement – Overseeing essential business services including governance, systems, risk management, compliance, finance, and administration—ensuring the organisation remains effective, accountable and focused on driving outcomes for community and Country.
- wawa biik – Sharing the proud Taungurung story through immersive cultural experiences that deeply connects people to Country.

Together, they assist teams across TLaWC to fulfil their strategic goals, cultural obligations and service delivery to the Taungurung people.



ADVOCACY AND ENGAGEMENT

The Advocacy and Engagement team acts as a key bridge between TLaWC operations and community-led guidance, seeing programs and initiatives shaped by the voices, priorities and aspirations of Taungurung people. Supporting Community Advisory Groups (CAGs) has remained a focus while working alongside community members to ensure their voices are heard and respected in all decision-making.

The team launched the new Berrgan Community Camps at the start of 2025, beginning with a February event at Camp Jungai. More details about the camps can be viewed on the highlights on page 13. Dhum Gaab events at both offices continue to provide space for community connection as the team drives the reclamation and revitalisation of cultural practices through a strong focus on language and dance.



LANGUAGE REFERENCE GROUP

The Language Reference Group (LRG) leads the revitalisation and promotion of Taungurung language on behalf of the Taungurung community. Operating as a key advisory body within TLaWC, the LRG promotes the respectful and accurate use of language in reports, publications, presentations and other communications. The LRG has provided language advice and translations for a wide range of projects, confirming plant and place names, and guiding appropriate use of Taungurung language across diverse contexts from local councils and schools to private landowners and businesses. The Taungurung community receives ongoing updates through the Language Matters section of TLaWC's quarterly newsletters. These updates

showcase language projects and developments, ensuring language revitalisation remains a visible and celebrated focus throughout the year.

The LRG welcomed guest speakers to its meetings, offering members valuable opportunities to deepen their cultural and linguistic understanding. These sessions reinforced the interrelationship between language and Country, and supported LRG members in their role as language advocates and knowledge holders. The future will see changes to the LRG's structure and operations, but remains an advisory group to lead the growth and use of Taungurung language.

Highlights from the past year include:

- The translation of Aesop's Fables into Taungurung language
- The naming of the Eildon Reserve Splash Park as Baanh ba Djila (Water and Play), a proud step in embedding Taungurung language on Country
- Development of a colouring-in book project with Macedon Ranges Shire Council, connecting children with local species and Taungurung names
- Ongoing progress on the second edition of the Taungurung dictionary, incorporating enhanced grammar insights and cross-referencing
- Representation at national forums, including the Bogong Moth summit in Canberra





Events

BERRGAN COMMUNITY CAMPS

Taungurung community gathered for a series of community camps this year aimed at strengthening connections through cultural activities and workshops. The camps have so far served as a key platform to discuss Treaty readiness and opportunities, and other key organisational projects on the horizon for community input and engagement. There have been many highlights throughout the camps, including the highly anticipated launch of Gagip

Wayilak Bayubarring (youth song and dance group) which was met with excitement and pride. The atmosphere was electric during performances by Radical Son and Blackfire, turning the space into a vibrant celebration of culture, creativity and community spirit. Cultural 'Walk and Talk' sessions were delivered by passionate Taungurung community members, offering participants an engaging way to learn about Country, culture and stories while walking together on the special grounds at Camp Jungai. The camps will continue throughout 2025 and into the future.



DHUM GAAB

The Dhum Gaab (Yarn Up!) events expanded to stakeholders for a chance to connect with TLaWC staff and Taungurung community members. A highlight this year was the Dhum Gaab that coincided with the April school holidays, offering a wide range of activities for all ages. The kids loved the interactive experience with native reptiles and animals. Cultural arts and crafts stations provided hands-on opportunities for creativity and learning, while a shared lunch encouraged conversation and connection among community members, Elders and TLaWC staff. The success of these Dhum Gaab events reinforces the importance of creating spaces where Taungurung culture, community and learning come together.

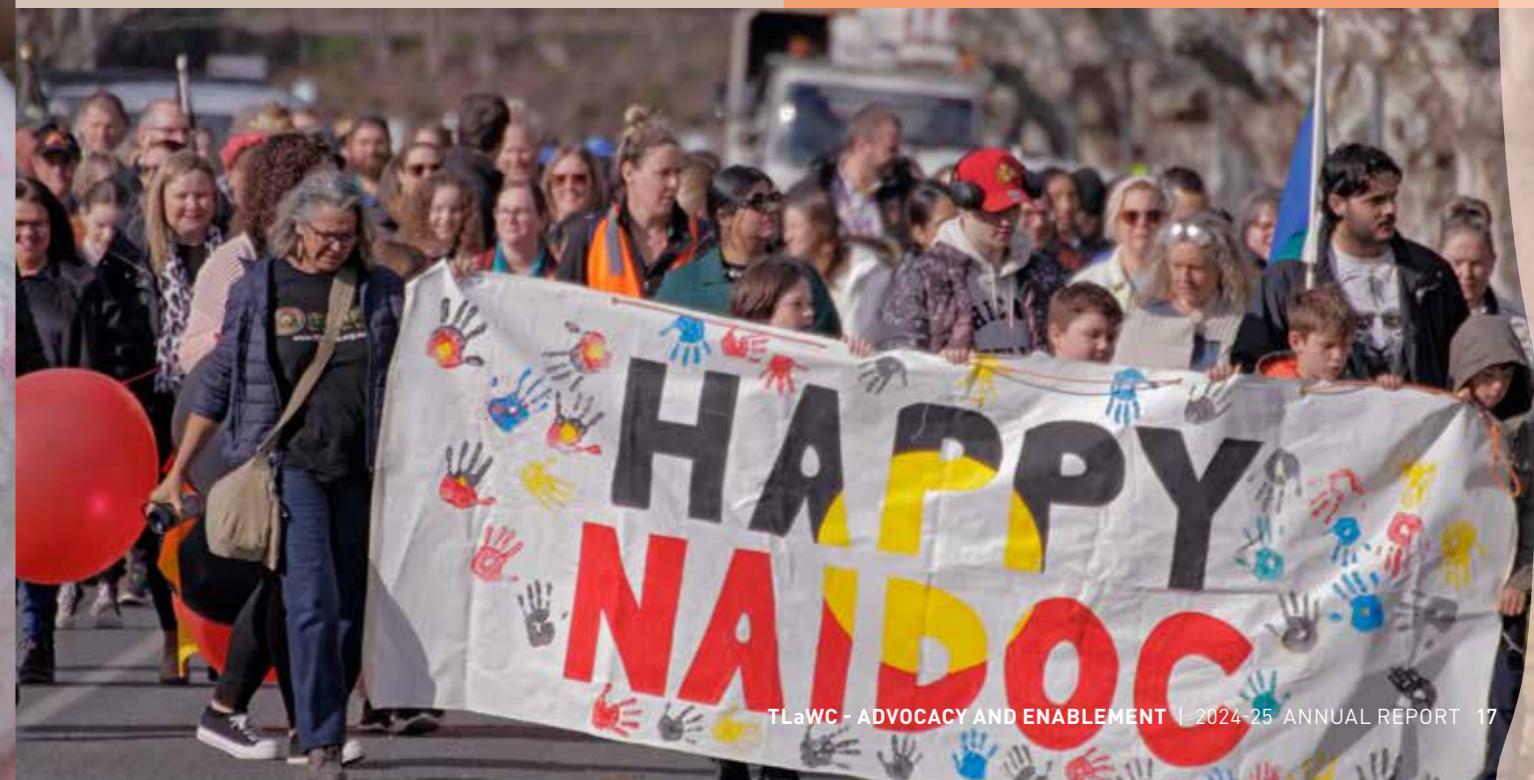


NAIDOC WEEK | 7-14 JULY 2024

TLaWC hosted annual NAIDOC Week celebrations to honour the national theme "Keep the Fire Burning! Blak, Loud and Proud". The week included a flag raising ceremony at both offices followed by an Elders Luncheon. Goranwarrabul House welcomed the community with a Welcome and Smoking Ceremony, followed by the annual NAIDOC Parade to Kings Park.

WAYILAK BAYUBARRING

Wayilak Bayubarring continues to grow and evolve. Still in its early stages, the group has embraced every opportunity to gather face to face, strengthening relationships and cultural identity. In 2024-25, the Gagip Wayilak Bayubarring project was delivered with support from VicHealth's Stronger Mobs funding. The initiative focused on fostering cultural knowledge through traditional dance and song, creating safe and empowering spaces for community members to learn and perform together. A highlight of the year was the Wayilak Bayubarring Camp, held in Mansfield. Day one saw the group visit Mount Buller to connect with alpine Country. Day two featured a cultural adornment-making workshop at the Mansfield Hotel, and concluded with a moving performance by Wayilak Bayubarring at Camp Jungai in February. Wayilak Bayubarring continues the collective journey of reconnecting and celebrating Taungurung identity.



KOORIE CURRICULUM CLUSTERS PROJECT

Now in its second year, the Koorie Curriculum Clusters project continues to build momentum across Taungurung Country, with a focus on refining our approach and strengthening meaningful partnerships with schools. This year, TLaWC welcomed three new schools (Broadford Primary School, Broadford Secondary College and Kilmore Primary School) joining the existing cluster of Euroa Primary School, Euroa Secondary College and Rubicon Outdoor Education Centre.

The project was initiated in response to a key recommendation of the Rural and Regional Review, aiming to boost educational and wellbeing outcomes for Koorie students. By fostering strong, place-based partnerships between schools and Traditional Owner communities, the project supports educators to teach cultures and perspectives in line with the Victorian Curriculum. A highlight this year was the showcase event at South Geelong Primary School which brought together all RAPs involved in the program with representatives from their cluster schools to network and have open conversations on the experience so far.

TLaWC were part of a panel sharing insights into our journey and the exciting future opportunities to strengthen education sector partnerships. Moving forward, the focus remains on embedding local knowledge and stories into teaching practice in deep partnership with schools and educators across Taungurung Country.

CORPORATE Enablement



PEOPLE AND WORKPLACE CULTURE

The People and Workplace Culture (PWC) team has focused on supporting staff growth, enhancing safety and wellbeing, and ensuring organisational structures continue to assist ways of working following the realignment in 2024. The development of the TLaWC Compensation Guide was a lead project that produced a comprehensive salary framework designed for fairness and transparency in remuneration practices. This guide has been a key step in aligning salary structure with the values of the organisation, ensuring that staff are compensated fairly for their contributions while maintaining internal equity across all roles. The implementation sees compensation practices align with industry standards, other Traditional Owner Corporations, relevant benchmarks and also reflects staff commitment to the organisation. The team made significant progress in reviewing and refining policies. Over the past year, a thorough process was undertaken to assess and streamline existing policies with the goal of creating a more concise, clear and robust policy framework. Bi-monthly leadership workshops continue where, in collaboration with managers, the team reviews current policies to ensure they are supportive of our mission. This process has strengthened the consistency and clarity of policies, which are communicated to all staff and are now more aligned with the needs of the workforce. The team is proud of the progress made this year and remain committed to continuously refining practices for a culturally safe and fair work environment for all staff.

FINANCE

The Finance team provides financial planning, analysis and management support across TLaWC's broad range of activities. This work contributes to effectively managing the organisation's resources and risks, always striving for continuous improvement and value. A review of procurement processes was undertaken during the year, with changes currently being implemented to make the process more effective. Investment management ensures that TLaWC is receiving the best possible outcome on all available funds. Contribution to governance processes is achieved through regular information and resources provided to both Daada Gurnap Nhilam (TLaWC's Risk and Audit Committee) and the Board of Directors to support planning and decision making. The Finance team has also worked to develop TLaWC's membership process in line with the existing ORIC (Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations) responsibilities. Maanamak Murrup Ltd, a subsidiary of TLaWC, achieved its initial registration as a Registered Housing Provider with the Victorian Housing Registrar. This work supports the Taungurung Biik Yilam Plan published during the year and connects with the Social Housing section on this page.

SOCIAL HOUSING

In 2024-25, TLaWC progressed Maanamak Murrup: a social housing project in Kyneton on Taungurung Country. Maanamak Murrup is Taungurung language for a comfortable life, capturing the project's purpose to enable more Taungurung community members to live on Country (if they choose and are eligible) including being on the Victorian Housing Register. As a Registered Housing Provider, TLaWC is focused on a culturally grounded, self-determined housing pathway. Funding was formalised in June 2025 through a funding deed under Homes for Aboriginal Victorians (Round 4, Social Housing Growth Fund) with funding by Homes Victoria. Execution of the deed confirms commencement and initiates the design review phase to align scope, budget and program for coordinated delivery. A project and development manager has been engaged to oversee day-to-day delivery and guide key decision points. Governance arrangements include a project control group, risk-based oversight, monthly reporting and staged approvals to maintain program discipline and value for money. The project will deliver 22 all-electric, adaptable and energy-efficient homes designed for durability and low running costs. A Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) has commenced and is being led by TLaWC's Taungurung RAP team to identify, respect and protect cultural values throughout planning and delivery.





wawa biik leads immersive cultural experiences on Taungurung Country, providing a way to build meaningful relationships and inspire ongoing interest and support of Taungurung aspirations. This year wawa biik has focused on the following core areas:

TESTIMONIALS

"The wawa biik (Nagambie) experience was incredibly immersive. The cultural knowledge shared gave us a deeper understanding of Taungurung Country and why it must be respected. Standing on Country and learning through story made a lasting impact. It's an experience that will stay with us and shape how we work moving forward."

– Suzy Barlow – Campaspe Shire Council

"I learnt so much from the two guides who took us on this experience. It was very motivating, interesting and easy to understand. They were very knowledgeable, and the whole experience was something I will never forget. I have been talking to everyone about it and recommending that they should go. It was a reset for me and very cleansing for the soul."

– Brooke, wawa Nagambie

wawa biik
(Hello Country)

CULTURAL EDUCATION

It was a delight to have both Active Avenel and Strathbogie Shire Council book a wawa Euroa wayilak experience to enable young participants to walk'n'talk with guides and have fun learning about Taungurung connections to Country.

A total of seven groups booked through local councils that have invested in cultural competency, with their teams attending to strengthen relationships and outcomes with TLaWC. wawa biik also delivered a cultural guide training program to equip a new cohort of Taungurung members to lead tours on Country. Led by the mentorship of Elders and experienced guides, the training involved three days of office training paired with on-Country days. This was achieved with partners at the Euroa Arboretum and Tahbilk Winery, as well as engaging in cultural experiences led by Koorie Heritage Trust and Dumawul. wawa biik now has eight guides to lead cultural experiences on Country.

598	Number of visitors
37	Total number of tours
26	Private Groups
11	Public tours
98	Post tour surveys received
83%	Of those surveyed would strongly recommend wawa biik to others
74%	Of those surveyed signed up to the newsletter and wanted to stay in touch and learn more

Most viewed blogs

- 10 Taungurung words to learn before visiting Country
- The Journey of Truth-telling and Treaty
- Returning Right Way Water to Taungurung Country

Attending the Strathbogie Shire Council's 'Climate Ready Garden Day' at Tahbilk Winery was a team highlight. Alongside Gardening Australia's Costa Georgiadis, wawa biik guide Uncle Shane addressed the audience regarding ways of caring for Country. The wawa biik team joined the Australian Indigenous Tourism Conference in Naarm, meeting with First Peoples tourism businesses from all over Australia. The team also partnered with Trust for Nature in delivering a new cultural experience at one of their reserves.

THE YEAR AHEAD

With increased capacity and funding through the DJSIR First Peoples Strengthening Fund and Aboriginal Growth Fund, wawa biik has an exciting year of growth ahead. Key projects will focus on strategic development, capacity building, experience development and strengthening advocacy and engagement – including an inaugural Taungurung Rivers and Mountains Festival to be held in 2026. Stay tuned for more details in wawa biik newsletters and on Instagram.



WAWA DHARRANG

With thanks to funding from Creative Victoria, wawa biik partnered with Uncle Mick Harding of Ngarga Warendj to create a new experience called 'wawa dharrang'. This partnership provided the platform for Uncle Mick and his two sons Mitchil and Corey to share their on-Country art project called We Scar Many Trees. Supported by wawa biik, they guided visitors from Yea to Yarck and beyond to discuss the significance of culturally modified trees, their deep connections to Country and the contemporary expression of culture through their art business and projects.

BIOCULTURAL Landscapes

The Biocultural Landscapes Department (BLD) was established in 2024 during TLaWC's organisational realignment, bringing together five core teams:

- Biocultural Knowledge Emergence (BKE)
- Cultural Land Management (CLM)
- Biik Land Management
- Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP)
- Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA)

The first full year of this structure has seen a range of positive outcomes achieved through ongoing collaboration and regular engagement on significant projects across Taungurung Country.



BIOCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE

Emergence

The role of the Biocultural Knowledge Emergence (BKE) team is to develop right ways of handling Taungurung knowledge to support projects across TLaWC and the Taungurung Nation. The team achieves this by supporting project delivery and collaboration points across key cultural landscapes and cultural governance activities. The 24-25 period was the first full year of operations for TLaWC's newest team.



CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE FOR INDIGENOUS AND ENVIRONMENTAL HISTORIES AND FUTURES (CIEFH)

TLaWC's partnership with the Australian Research Council's Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures (CIEFH) commenced. TLaWC's primary partner in this relationship is Melbourne University, however the broader partnership comprises eight universities and their Indigenous Partner organisations as well as research partners such as CSIRO and Museums Victoria. This partnership provides the opportunity for members of the Taungurung Nation to undertake a PhD in Indigenous Knowledge. Supported by the Indigenous Knowledge Institute, this can assist students from different educational backgrounds to produce a variety of research outputs. The BKE team helps onboard Taungurung people into this program, while the CIEFH partnership also has the potential to provide research support to TLaWC's CLM team. This will include the collection of data such as pollen cores from the Corop Cultural Waterscape, the Strathbogie Ranges and Mt Buffalo. These records prior to and after invasion help the overall BLD to understand and manage Country. A key component of the project has been developing processes and agreements to ensure that Taungurung knowledges are protected when needed and authorship properly attributed when used by external researchers. All knowledge comes from biik (Country) and Taungurung people are the primary source of Taungurung Knowledge as the owners and partners in research.

READING COUNTRY

BKE is responsible for the implementation, development and adaptive review of the Reading Country method. The Reading Country method has been created over the past few years in conjunction with members of the Taungurung Nation during Reading Country camps. It describes a knowledge management process and identifies cultural governance touchpoints. One of the strongest aspects of the method has been supporting Taungurung people to be on biik and encouraging non-Taungurung people to slow down and listen to biik speak. The team's memorable moments all came from Country: the power of the Camel Range, sunsets over Reedy Lake and re-connection with the Box Ironbark Forests. The Reading Country method is supported by other tools currently in development, including the Biocultural Research Framework and Knowledge Healing Framework. The team is aware of the need to support the publication of work to ensure that TLaWC's Intellectual Property and Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) is protected, enthused by the prospect of sharing this work more broadly.

ADVOCATING FOR CULTURAL SPECIES

It is with considerable disappointment that TLaWC reflects on the outcomes for yirringan (dingo) over the past year. Despite sustained attempts at advocacy and engagement – and a TLaWC media release to highlight the organisation's position and preferences – lethal control of yirringan is still permitted on Taungurung biik and opportunities for partnership with Traditional Owners have not progressed. The team will continue to engage and fight for this species and calls on partners to support this fight. More positive pathways exist for deberra (bogong moth) as the team builds relationships with a number of researchers to understand the needs and behaviour of the species on Taungurung biik. Progression on the development of the Taungurung Seasonal Calendar has been made, which will support the health of biik and all its entities.



CULTURAL LAND Management

The Cultural Land Management (CLM) team's main priorities have continued to expand alongside the growth of the team. The Taungurung Cultural Land Management 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 sets objectives alongside Taungurung cultural values. This year, the team has completed strategic statements for each of the program areas which, together with an agreed list of priority projects and major initiatives, will allow work to be prioritised for maximum impact.

In staffing and recruitment, the Victorian government funding environment has tightened in the last 12 months to result in a need to prioritise and collaborate in strategic delivery. Despite this, significant progress has been made with major initiatives viewed on these pages. The team is also in the process of starting a major new cultural landscape development program for Stone Country.

The vision of the Cultural Land Management team is that Country and people are healing. The inherent rights and interests of Taungurung people in Country will be enabled and activated. TLaWC extends thanks to all members of the Nation who have also walked this path.



The Cultural Land Management Strategy informs all the work undertaken by the team. The four key strategy areas are:



HEALING KNOWLEDGE

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



HEALING COUNTRY

Supports the healing, adaptation and application of cultural land management practices, supported by the Taungurung Rangers program and Biik Cultural Land Management team.



MANAGING COUNTRY

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



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.

CLM PROGRAMS

To respond to the four CLM Strategy themes, there are several Program Areas (PA) responding to the priorities raised by Taungurung community and available opportunities. This guides objective and priority setting. Each program will be developed to deliver outcomes across the four Strategy themes. The PAs and a brief description of the achievements to date are provided below.

CULTURAL LANDSCAPES PROGRAM – COROP WETLANDS

The Corop wetlands are at the heart of a significant cultural landscape on Taungurung Country. This is a cultural landscape system that, for Taungurung people, holds meanings inherently connected to water bodies and wetlands, and flows of water and energy – supporting the expression of important biocultural and ecological values (such as Brolga and many listed threatened species). It now also supports other diverse values including agricultural livelihoods dependent on grazing and cropping, and a wide range of recreational uses. The Corop Cultural Waterscape is an opportunity to demonstrate a transformation in collectively managing Country. In the contemporary context, the waterscape has become sick through the fragmentation of land and water management. But the Corop Wetlands Cultural Waterscape is now driving collective, Country-led, culturally informed leadership and

action that promises to heal Country by bringing Traditional Owners together with government agencies and the wider community. The program is a partnership between the Taungurung Nation, TLaWC, DEECA, the Goulburn Broken CMA, Goulburn-Murray Water, the Victorian Environmental Water Holder, Parks Victoria, DJSIR, local government, and the local community.

The Corop program is now in the second year of Phase 2: the Feasibility Phase, which includes establishment of a Strategic Leadership Group (SLG), three active Working Groups (Institutional, Livelihoods, and Biocultural and Environmental) and three Pilot sites. Significant progress has been made to understand biocultural expressions and values across the waterscape. This includes the development of a Corop *Country Speaks Statement* to guide planning and management. Connections are building between the Taungurung and non-Taungurung parts of the program to support two-way understanding and right-way decision making. This has included Taungurung-led cultural tours of parts of the Corop landscape for Working Group members. Updates will continue to be provided through TLaWC newsletters and social media.



100-YEAR VISION: The Corop Wetlands is a healthy and thriving cultural waterscape that supports and sustains all beings. The waterscape is governed through right-way decision making, founded on collaborative partnerships, partnering principles, and trusting and reciprocal relationships. This enables us to act together on cultural obligations to care for Country and ensure that all practices applied within the Waterscape are consistent with healing and caring for Country.



CULTURAL WATER PROGRAM

The Cultural Water Program cares for Baan (water) in a culturally sound way by bringing together Taungurung community through the Baan Ganalina water knowledge group. The program is focused on actions to heal water Country and demonstrate Taungurung leadership to the wider community, engaging with government programs and carrying out advocacy to further Taungurung policy goals in the water space. Baan Ganalina meets monthly to discuss Taungurung water business and attend on-Country events to guide key water program projects. The focus of the group over the last year has been to strengthen collective community voice and recover knowledge while guiding the ongoing development of the water program. Key events have included cultural waterway assessments as well as an ongoing program of on-Country knowledge – sharing yarns to support handback of knowledge about important entities within water Country such as fish, mussels and crayfish.

Horseshoe Lagoon – a significant cultural place on Waring – has been a central focus for the water program since water was first returned to the lagoon in 2019. Water was again to be delivered to the lagoon in 2025 for the first time since the 2022

floods, now complemented by the construction of a Turtle *yilam* (camp), which is a floating island providing a nesting place for turtles where eggs are protected from foxes (page 12). A *Horseshoe Lagoon Healthy Country Plan* has also been developed, bringing together years of work with Baan Ganalina to transmit knowledge and map pathways for action, ongoing planning and learning under a range of themes.

The team is preparing for the ongoing development of the Waring waterscape program over the next year by leveraging strengthening relationships with government partners and the GBCMA. Funding has been secured to undertake much needed work to heal knowledge about the Waring waterscape through a Reading Country process and related self-determined activities, including building Taungurung capacity to care for native fish populations.

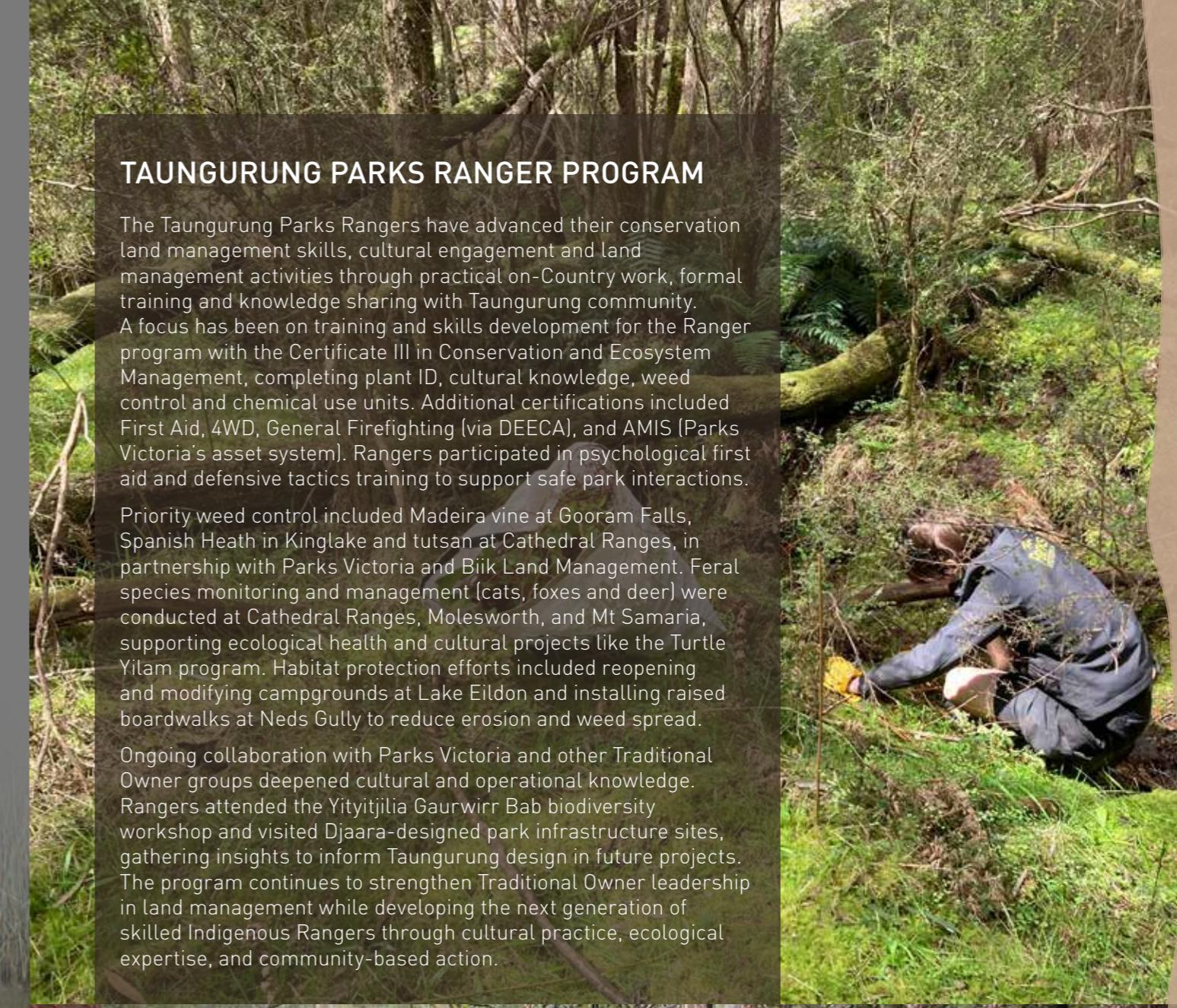


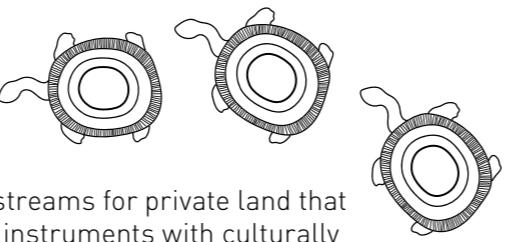
TAUNGURUNG PARKS RANGER PROGRAM

The Taungurung Parks Rangers have advanced their conservation land management skills, cultural engagement and land management activities through practical on-Country work, formal training and knowledge sharing with Taungurung community. A focus has been on training and skills development for the Ranger program with the Certificate III in Conservation and Ecosystem Management, completing plant ID, cultural knowledge, weed control and chemical use units. Additional certifications included First Aid, 4WD, General Firefighting (via DEECA), and AMIS (Parks Victoria's asset system). Rangers participated in psychological first aid and defensive tactics training to support safe park interactions.

Priority weed control included Madeira vine at Gooram Falls, Spanish Heath in Kinglake and tutsan at Cathedral Ranges, in partnership with Parks Victoria and Biik Land Management. Feral species monitoring and management (cats, foxes and deer) were conducted at Cathedral Ranges, Molesworth, and Mt Samaria, supporting ecological health and cultural projects like the Turtle Yilam program. Habitat protection efforts included reopening and modifying campgrounds at Lake Eildon and installing raised boardwalks at Neds Gully to reduce erosion and weed spread.

Ongoing collaboration with Parks Victoria and other Traditional Owner groups deepened cultural and operational knowledge. Rangers attended the Yityitjilia Gaurwirr Bab biodiversity workshop and visited Djaara-designed park infrastructure sites, gathering insights to inform Taungurung design in future projects. The program continues to strengthen Traditional Owner leadership in land management while developing the next generation of skilled Indigenous Rangers through cultural practice, ecological expertise, and community-based action.





PRIVATE LAND ACQUISITION AND DEVELOPMENT

A report by Environmental Justice Australia (EJA) has been developed to provide strategic actions that will resolve barriers in supporting cultural obligations on private land not owned by the Taungurung Nation. This identifies pathways to overcome barriers imposed by conservation parties and government on private properties title agreements to provide a protection regime. This can add barriers in applying culturally informed practices that will heal and care for Country within a landscape context. Next steps include engagement with the DEECA Biodiversity Division, Trust for Nature and other conservation parties to pilot provisions that will assist active management. As a companion to the on-title agreements report, University of Melbourne researchers have been engaged to analyse opportunities in natural capital markets development. The focus is on

blended revenue streams for private land that combines market instruments with culturally informed property planning and management. Report recommendations will be merged into the TLaWC Private Land Acquisition and Development Strategy.

The team continues to advance the Nyagaroon Project to enhance the vision for the property. While there have been challenges, the focus is on property safety (physically and culturally) and to be accessible to community in connecting on Country. The team collaborated with RAP staff to complete a Cultural Heritage Management Plan (CHMP) for the property. Dealings with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) have been strengthened, working through the official sign-off for the 52.30 planning pathway. TLaWC has engaged with consultants to adhere to the Bushfire Management Overlay (BMO) and other planning considerations. More to come.



CULTURAL FOREST PROGRAM

The Cultural Forest Program (CFP) seeks to forward the rights and interests of the Taungurung Nation across the forest landscapes of Taungurung Country – both on public and private land tenures. The development of a strategic statement aiming to guide the future direction of the CFP was a key achievement, with this document consistent with the strategic themes of the CLM Strategy while focusing on the diverse forested landscapes. The CFP's progress is related to the strategic theme '*Ngarrap Biik (Forest Country) is known from top to bottom*'. This includes the planning and delivery of two large-scale on-Country assessments, the Whroo Forest Rapid Biocultural Assessment and the Eastern Forests Rapid Biocultural Assessment. These multi-day assessments saw the CFP work with members of the Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle (FFKC) to deepen the collective understanding of the biocultural expressions related to the forests across Taungurung Country. Closely related to the On-Country work was the development of a framework to map the concept of a 'Taungurung

Country Type', and the development and testing of a new forest assessment tool specific to the Yerrin (box and ironbark) ecosystem. The FFKC continues to play a crucial role in the linking of Taungurung Cultural knowledges with western, contemporary forest management practice.

TLaWC participated in The Great Outdoors Taskforce, which was established to provide recommendations to government on how Victoria can approach future use and management of Victoria's state forests that were previously subject to timber harvesting. The Taskforce has considered 1.5 million hectares of state forests previously managed for timber, and relevant adjacent state forests (about 590,000 hectares), where assessment of these areas supports a cultural landscapes approach for Traditional Owners or will help with management continuity. The Great Outdoors Taskforce recommendations support Taungurung rights and interests in forests that sit on Taungurung Country. During this process, TLaWC has met with the Environment Minister to progress the Strathbogies as a pilot cultural landscape in forested Country.

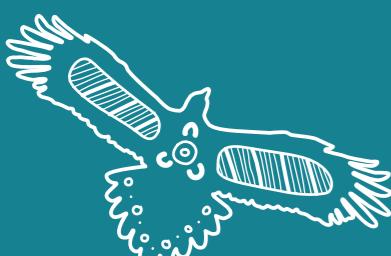


REGISTERED ABORIGINAL Party

The Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) team 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. The team enacted its RAP Strategy, with projects set within four theme areas of Healing Stories, Healing Practices, Custodianship as Cultural Heritage Management and Vibrant Country.

This was an opportunity to talk to the world about the issues still faced under the colonial system, and also to share healing stories like the return of Garden Range and the Taungurung field school. The team heard similar stories from First Nations across the world who also struggle with the pressures of government policy and managing heritage protections against industry demand

- Daniel Young, proud Taungurung man



COMPLIANCE

Compliance activities over the 24/25 financial year included responding to potential noncompliance with the AHA 2006. There was a total of 51 compliance investigations (16 site inspections, 35 cases) in this time. The outcomes of these cases are 1 prosecution, 32 resolved by the RAP and 8 monitored cases, leaving 10 active and ongoing investigations.

Quarter	Time Range 2024-2025	Working days	Ave. No of staff deployed	Ave. No of staff per day
Q1	Jul - Sep 24	65	192	3
Q2	Oct - Dec 24	61	192	3
Q3	Jan - Mar 25	62	171	3
Q4	Apr - Jun 25	62	194	3
Total	Jul 2024 – Jun 2025	250	749	3

CULTURAL HERITAGE FIELDWORK

There were three Field Services Officers (FSO) deployed per day on Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMP) and internal TLaWC projects. Related projects included CHMP field assessments and archaeological salvage. The CHMPs are being approved within statutory timeframes. CHMPs 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 out with CHMP bookings, ensuring security for the TLaWC RAP team with all CHMP works.

Quarter	Financial Quarter 2024/25	CHMPs	CHPs
Q1	Jul - Sep 2024	7	2
Q2	Oct - Dec 2024	8	8
Q3	Jan - Mar 2025	1	1
Q4	Apr - Jun 2025	4	0

PROJECTS

EARLY STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT

The RAP team continues to lead Early Strategic Engagement meetings and Letters of Advice (Due Diligence Assessments) for external parties and partners. There were 11 Early Strategic Engagement meetings within the year. Early Strategic Engagement meetings and Due Diligence Assessments are opportunities for developers, councils, government agencies and other private businesses to seek TLaWC RAP team advice on planned development projects. The meetings and letters are chargeable and provide an alternative and proactive entry point for consultation before the development or activity triggers a CHMP or CHP.

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.

- The ACHLMA with GBCMA has been renewed. It has been extended to cover all of TLaWC RAP and all GBCMA works on named waterways.
- The RAP team is also in consultation with DEECA for an ACHLMA which will strengthen the engagement and replace the current CHP process for a list of works including strategic fire breaks.

PARTNERSHIPS

TLaWC was successful in acquiring a one-year DEECA funded project to survey and assess Box Ironbark Country in the Corop area. The project has been successful in identifying previously unknown cultural heritage values in the region and will help inform future works on Cultural Heritage management. The team is in the final phase of this project, submitting registrations and completing the project report. TLaWC partnered with La Trobe University to apply for a grant to develop a system for recording and repatriating artefacts with 3D scanning technologies. The application was successful, and the team is now working to implement new strategies for recording artefacts.

FIELD SCHOOL

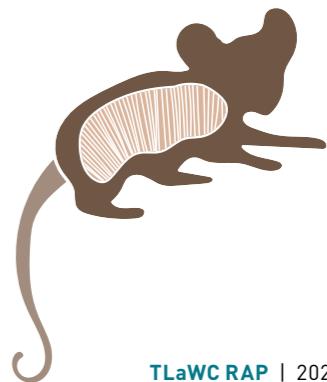
The Taungurung Archaeological and Cultural Field School was created to address cultural and practical skills deficits identified within the discipline, hosted in February 2025. The week was a success, with an attendance of 18 students who all provided feedback that was highly positive. The focus was on two-way learning and providing guidance around ethical practices for archaeologists. The field school was designed to follow the RAP strategy of putting into practice Healing Stories and Healing Practices. Students recorded a large artefact scatter site at Lake Eildon. This site is not currently protected by a sensitivity layer but will soon change thanks to the work completed by the participants.

WORLD ARCHAEOLOGY CONGRESS

TLaWC's RAP team were proud to present at the World Archaeology Congress (WAC) in Darwin. This was the first time the WAC had been held in Australia and was an opportunity to present on a world stage. The team presented four papers at the event:

- Returning Garden Range to the Rightful Taungurung Custodians
- Healing Stories – Taungurung led Archaeological Field School
- Reducing Indigenous knowledge and cultural complexity under the colonial system of DSuz (Data Suzerainty)
- Reconnecting Old and New with Non-destructive pXRF in Taungurung Research

The team presented again to Taungurung community and TLaWC staff during NAIDOC Week.



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 were 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.

Community Benefits \$93,164

- 10 Site Inspections
- 11 Negotiation B Notifications
- 126 Advisory Notifications
- 7 Exploratory Licence contracts negotiated

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 team undertook a self-audit, assessing all processes and responsibilities. This saw a stronger streamlined procedure as the team transferred all files from SharePoint to the Microsoft Teams platform. Working began on the first 5-year Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) review, which will be detailed further in upcoming reports. The team continues to work on the Joint Fuel Management Program dispute via a working group of DEECA and TLaWC representatives.

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.

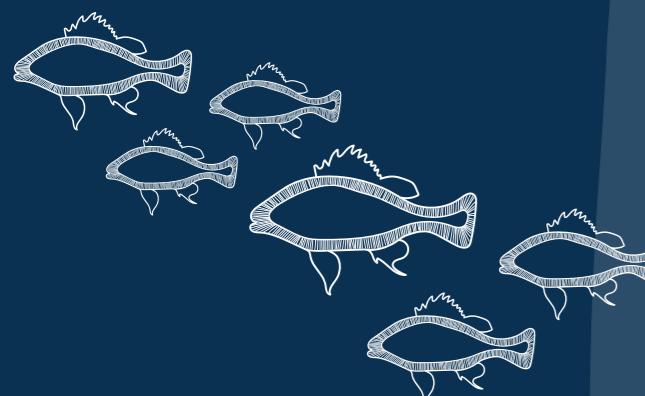
Land Agreement This agreement provides a mechanism for transfer to TLaWC of national parks and reserves as Aboriginal title and any Crown land the State has agreed to transfer as freehold.

Funding Agreement The State provides TLaWC with a range of funding which includes 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.

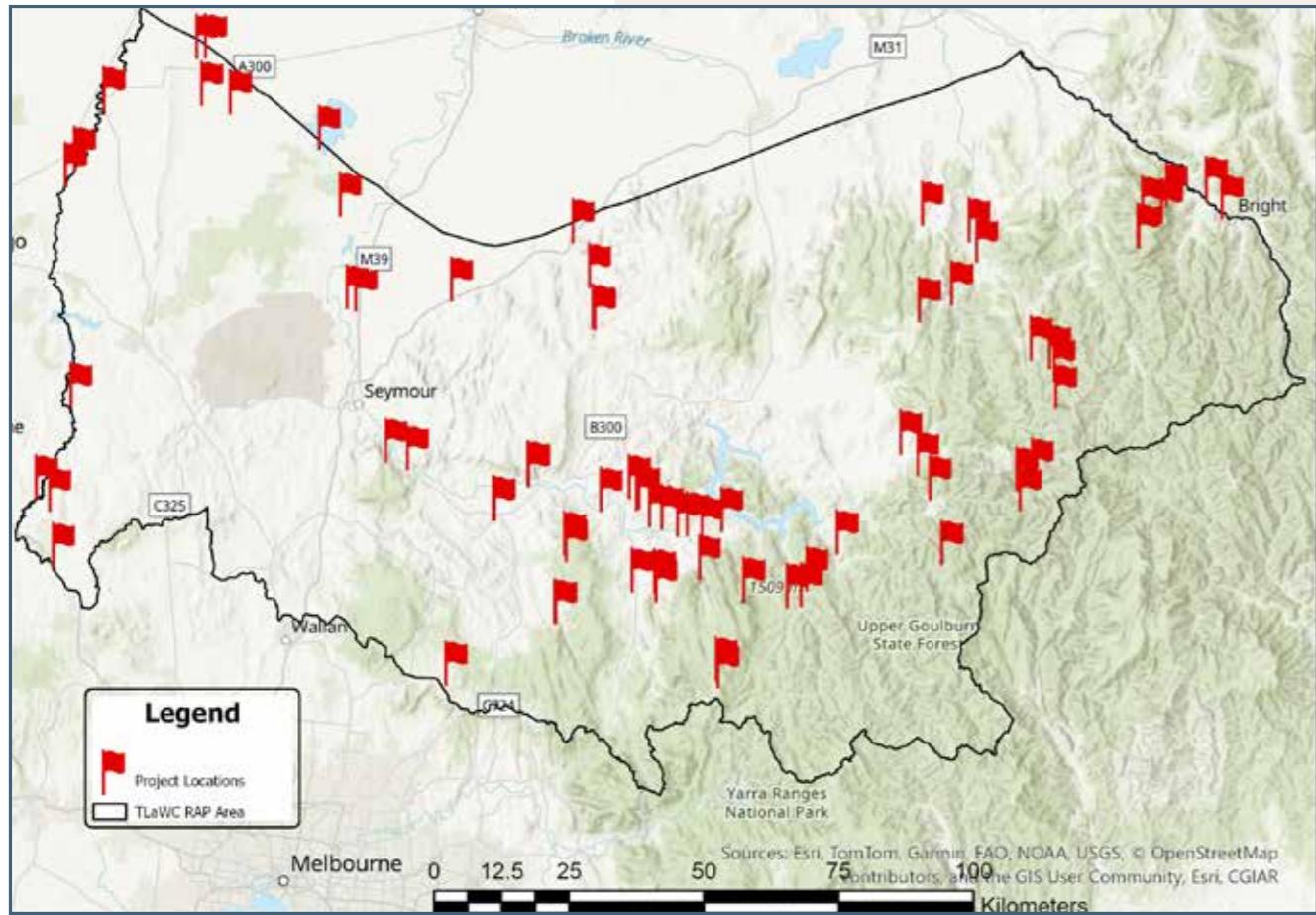
Traditional Owner Land Natural Resource Agreement (TOLNRA) The TOLNRA allows for Taungurung community members to exercise their NRA rights on land owned by TLaWC, irrespective of any planning or other regulations which may otherwise prohibit such activities.

Participation Agreement Victorian Traditional Owners Trust (VTOT) This agreement sets out the framework for the management and distribution of funding to be deposited in the trust, VTOT.



The Biik Land Management team consolidated growth and drafted a strategy to lead through the next phase of works. Staff and assets were rationalised to create a much more compact team, while a focus on areas that increased value to the Taungurung Nation aligned to wider TLaWC goals and strategies. Key to this process has been building strong partnerships, relationships and projects with other land managing entities such as Local Government, Catchment Management Authorities, DEECA, Parks Victoria, Water Authorities and the Department of Transport and Planning. Special thanks to partners for specific funding that allows for self-determined project design and enhanced Taungurung community outcomes.

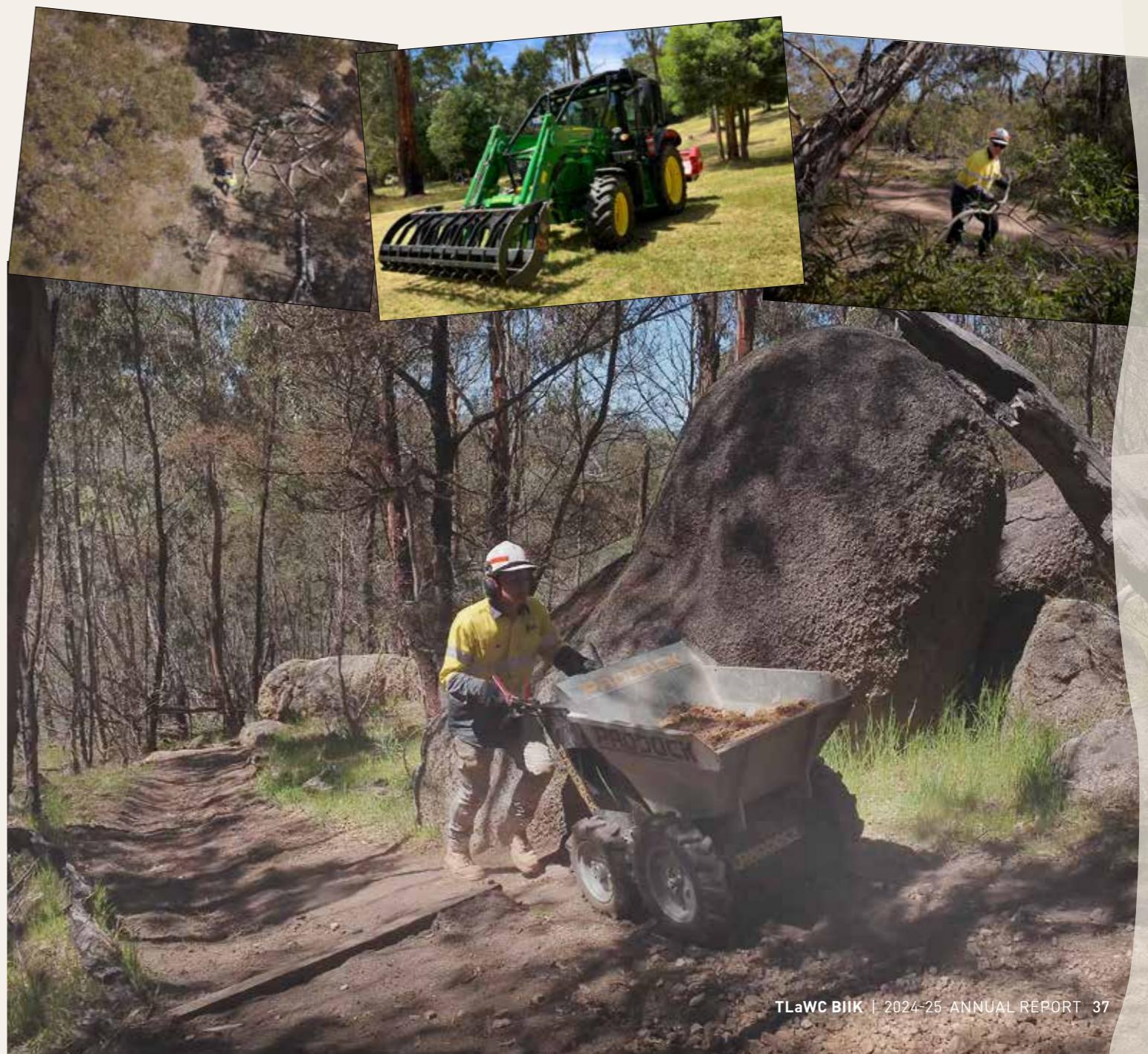
Over the year, team delivered more than 80 projects from single day jobs to complex 50-day projects requiring design, ecological survey, analysis, planning and implementation of habitat augmentation strategies. Over 10,000 seedlings were planted, 4,000 weed locations treated, 76 pest animals dealt with collaboratively and 19 nest boxes installed. Please read on for more details about these projects.



CONNECTING CULTURE AND COUNTRY

Biik Land Management partnered with Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority (GBCMA) to deliver the Connecting Culture and Country project at Reedy Lake Reserve, Nagambie. This initiative builds upon years of cultural and ecological restoration at the site. Throughout the year, the team conducted a variety of on-ground activities including planting 1,500 native seedlings, tree health assessments, wildlife habitat monitoring and the observation and recording of seasonal changes in bird populations. These activities play a critical role in the ongoing healing of Country and support the reintegration of cultural land management practices at Reedy

Lake. A field day hosted by Biik and GBCMA brought together local landholders and the Taungurung community. The event included a wawa biik cultural experience, offering participants a unique perspective on the Taungurung cultural significance of Reedy Lake. Landholders shared their stories and discussed land management challenges with agency representatives, reinforcing the value of collaborative stewardship. This program, funded by the Victorian Government's Our Catchments, Our Communities initiative, is aligned with the Reedy Lake Pilot program led by TLaWC and contributes to a broader vision across the Corop Wetlands Cultural Landscape.



WETLAND RESTORATION AND SEED COLLECTION TRIALS

Biik participated in an experimental wetland restoration project focused on improving the ecological and cultural health of wetlands along Waring. Crew members collected seeds from ecologically and culturally significant plant species at sites near Alexandra and the Yea Wetlands. The species are essential for wetland function, providing both food and habitat for wildlife. Seeds collected during the project were either translocated to Horseshoe Lagoon in Trawool for trial seeding, or stored at the Alexandra depot for future propagation and sowing. This initiative offered a valuable opportunity for the Biik team to explore methods for translocating plant material between wetland systems and improving wetland resilience over time.



BLACK HILL WALKING TRACK IMPROVEMENTS

Macedon Shire Council's Southern Ecosystem Management (SEM) and Biik partnered to deliver a series of walking track improvements at Black Hill Reserve. This included constructing staircases, enhancing drainage, and rehabilitation of damaged sections. Over 400 invasive Sallow Wattle saplings were removed using hand tools and chemical treatments. This physically demanding but rewarding project has improved safety and access for visitors to the reserve while also strengthening Biik's working relationship with the Macedon Ranges Shire Council. The crew is scheduled to return to Black Hill to carry out further weed control activities as part of the ongoing management of the site.



LONG-FOOTED POTOROO MONITORING

Biik staff collaborated with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and Parks Victoria to deliver targeted fauna monitoring in the Mount Buffalo National Park and Buckland Valley State Forest. Over four days of field work, the team installed camera traps in remote locations, working in challenging terrain to support the study of the long-footed potoroo and monitor predator populations such as cats and foxes.

This contributed to a broader data collection effort involving 149 camera traps across the landscape. The results were significant. Long-footed potoroos were detected at 74 out of 147 surveyed sites, representing a 7% increase in detection sites compared to the previous year. This brings the site detection rate to just over 50 percent. The team also recorded key habitat features and observed signs of potoroo activity, contributing further insights to this long-term monitoring effort.



BIOCULTURAL RESOURCE CENTRE

Biik is establishing a Biocultural Resource Centre in Alexandra following the successful award of the BushBank First Peoples funding stream. **Wanwarren Yungurdi** native plant nursery is set to be built soon, targeting 30,000 plants at the top production. The nursery will focus on cultivating a diverse range of native species under two key streams:

1. Local native plants grown to order for Natural Resource Management projects

2. Bush tucker and fibre plants that are of cultural significance to Taungurung people

At this stage, the team plans to grow a small number of key plant species suited to each Country type. Staff connected with Taungurung community at the Berrgan Community camp in May 2025 by listening and sharing knowledge about native plants. Seeds will be harvested for restoration from culturally important areas of Country, used directly in restoration or for use in the nursery.



Treaty

Communications

Treaty became an official possibility this year for the first time since European Settlement. This follows many years of establishing the conditions to enable Treaty-making between First Peoples and the State of Victoria. Treaty is a tool to enable the re-establishment of rights for First Peoples, and in doing so it is fundamentally about building a better future for all Victorians. Treaty is an agreement between two Nations about how they will share land, resources and decision-making, and show respect to each other's cultures, rights and needs. Taungurung People have been actively working to progress these opportunities alongside other First Nations leaders. In June, TLaWC Staff and members of the Taungurung Nation joined the Walk for Truth, chaperoning the Yoorrook Justice Commission's final report to parliament. The work of the Commission, including this report, is an important step for truth-telling and healing that will pave the way for Treaty negotiations in Victoria.

In Statewide Treaty forums, the Taungurung People have been represented this year, first by Matthew Burns, and now Kaley Nicholson as Taungurung Reserved Seat Holders on the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. Voted for by the Taungurung Community, these representatives have worked to ensure that Taungurung voices have been heard in the negotiations for the first Statewide Treaty for Victoria. This will be the first Treaty with colonisers ever to be signed on the Australian continent, and the first Treaty worldwide to be signed in decades. As well as Statewide, there is also an opportunity for Treaties to be developed directly with each of the First Nations within the area we now call Victoria. The Taungurung Community have been coming together to discuss and consider whether they wish to pursue a Treaty for their Nation. Treaty will be a journey taken over many years, recognizing Taungurung sovereignty and enabling Taungurung people to direct and deliver outcomes for the Taungurung Nation.

Renewable Energy

The Communications team continued to support the organisation in crafting and announcing achievements, updates and stories to both community and the wider public in positivity and with purpose. This starts internally, as a new Communications Strategy was established to lead communications processes for the next five years. Alongside the Strategy, a Communications Manual was produced to ensure all staff have access to a document that outlines TLaWC's style, messaging and brand. The team continues to play a supporting role across the organisation, promoting stories through newsletters, the Community Portal, publications, social media and media releases. To enhance staff communications, a monthly staff newsletter was created to provide a space for staff interviews, competitions, polls and shout-outs. This has been well received and engagement levels demonstrate high readership across the organisation. Many important processes such as voting (Treaty representative, Co-Chair of the Local Government Forum), satisfaction surveys, engaging with artists for merchandise collaborations and finding a new artist for the next branding phase are led by Communications and see consistent results. Media releases were produced in topics that saw media engagement and circulation, including the dingo unprotection order, the desecration of Paradise Falls and the work in the Central Highlands – adding the Taungurung voice to news stories that impact Taungurung people and Country.

TLaWC was awarded two grants for solar, batteries and EV charging infrastructure. The first was received from AusNet Services through the Energy Resilience Community Fund to add a battery to the existing solar at the Alexandra Office. Adding a battery to the solar means the site can run off-grid when the power goes out, providing business continuity for TLaWC and a safe place for TLaWC members and the local community to gather. This grant also covers TLaWC's first EV charging station, which will be available for staff, visitors and the public, with expected completion by December 2025.

The other successful grant was the First Peoples Solar and Storage Initiative. This will fund the installation of solar, batteries and EV charger at the Alexandra depot and solar and batteries at a second site of a partner or business, where the aim is to add renewable energy, lower onsite costs and earn an income for TLaWC. These on-ground projects can deliver many benefits, providing valuable learning as the organisation considers undertaking more projects in the future.



CORPORATE Governance

ATTENDANCE TABLE

DIRECTOR	Attended	Eligible
Kaley Nicholson	6	6
Marcus Stewart	5	6
Isobel Morphy-Walsh	4	6
Aunty Patsy Smith	3	6
Aunty Jacqui Stewart	5	6
Aunty Loraine Padgham	6	6
Alex Burns	6	6
Grant Hansen	1	6
Andrew Gargett	0	0

DAADA GURNAP NHILAM (TLWC'S RISK AND AUDIT COMMITTEE)

Daada Gurnap Nhilam provides independent oversight of TLaWC's financial management, risk frameworks and governance processes. There are three independent members and one board appointee. Throughout the year, the Committee reviewed quarterly financial reports and supported budget development processes, ensuring robust financial planning in the context of significant funding uncertainties. Key areas of focus included discussions on financial sustainability, supporting review of TLaWC's procurement policy and discussions around access to investments and next steps. The Committee received reports on strategic risks, particularly grant funding sustainability, financial resilience, and work health and safety issues while tracking management's implementation of control measures. The Committee also discussed and reviewed business continuity planning, policy processes and certain specific legal risk matters.

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 the Taungurung Treaty Representative and also the Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations.



Marcus Stewart
Deputy Chair

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.



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 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.



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.



Aunty Loraine Padgham
Director

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



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.



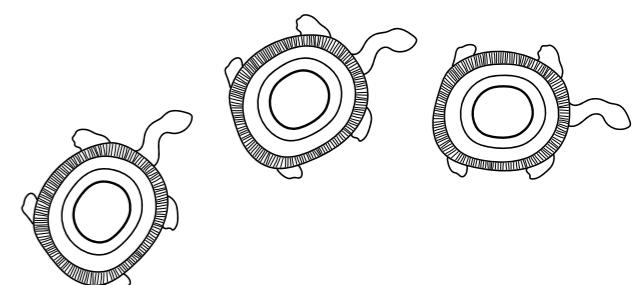
Grant Hansen
Director

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 Marnbrook Footy Show* and has a long background of productive involvement in Aboriginal affairs.

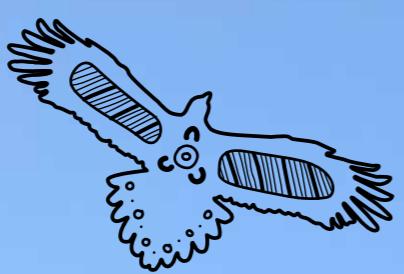


Andrew Gargett
Director

Andy is a trusted senior advisor with extensive expertise in policy development, communications, stakeholder engagement, politics and governance processes. Andy was the inaugural CEO of the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria and built strong relationships with Victorian Cabinet Ministers to drive innovative and complex structural changes through the Treaty process. Andy also negotiated Australia's first truth telling process, the Yoorrook Justice Commission.



ORGANISATION structure



EXECUTIVE STAFF



Matthew Burns
CEO

Matthew Burns was appointed as CEO of Taungurung Land & Waters Council (TLaWC) in February 2018 and is a proud Taungurung man. He has supported the significant growth and diversity of TLaWC's functions and has led TLaWC in elevating its status as a leading Traditional Owner entity in the State. Matthew is currently Treasurer of the Victorian Aboriginal Child & Community Agency (VACCA) and Non-Executive Director of Greater Western Water (GWW).



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.



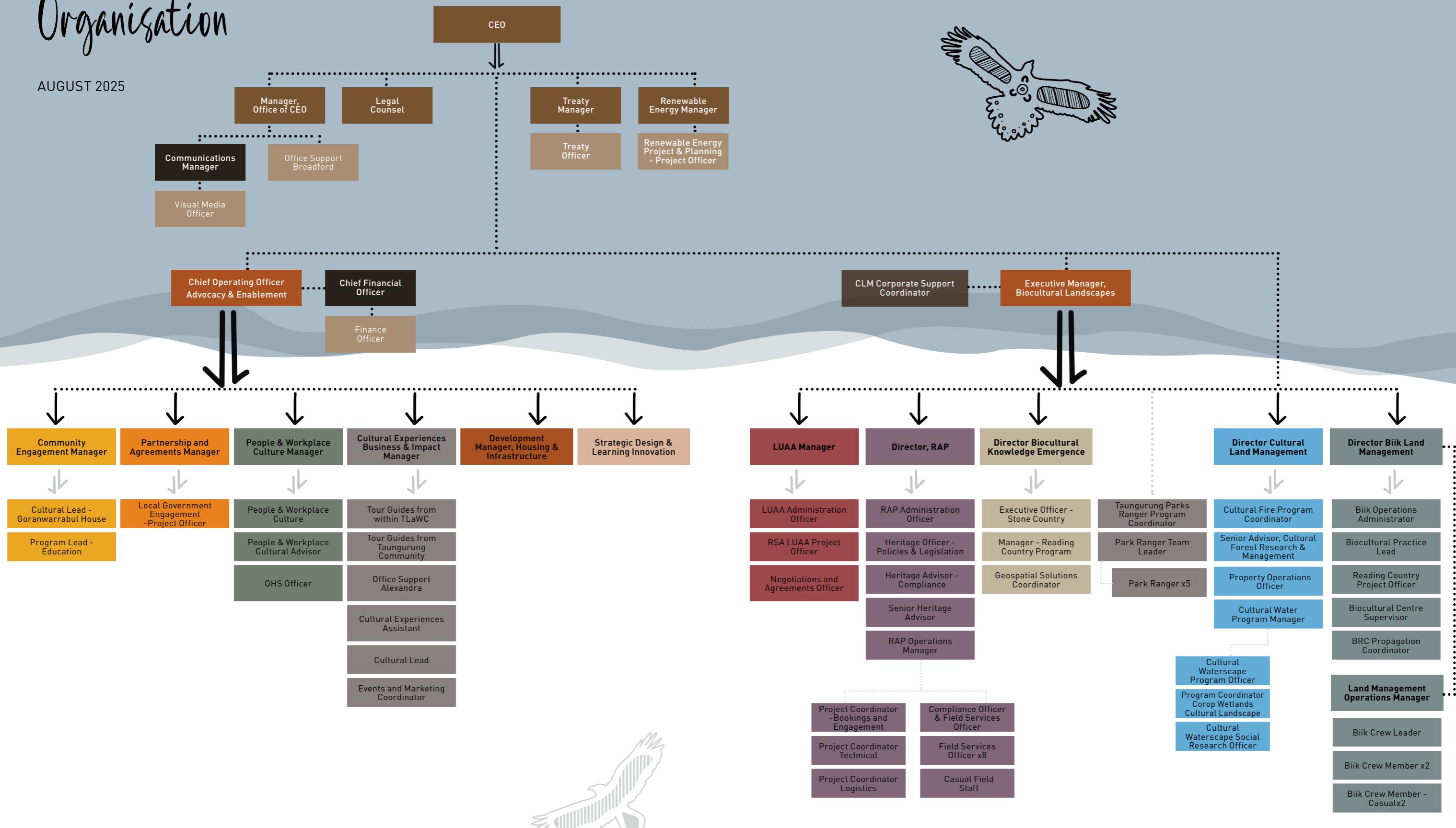
Kristie Norton
Chief Financial Officer

Kristie is TLaWC's Chief Financial Officer, providing oversight, analysis and advice with a practical financial and operational lens. Kristie brings a broad range of experience ranging from not-for-profit groups through to ASX listed companies and is proud to support the future of the Taungurung Nation through responsible financial management.



TLaWC Organisation

AUGUST 2025





GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Australian Research Council Center of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Future (CIEFH)
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 Advisory Groups (CAG)
Cultural Environment Social Governance (CESG)
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 Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions (DJSIR)
Department of Transport and Planning (DTP)
Dhum Gaab (Yarn Up)
Ecological Vegetation Class (EVC)
Environmental Justice Australia (EJA)
First Peoples - State Relations (FPSR)
Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle (FFKC)
Gagip Wayilak Bayubarring (Youth song and dance group)
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)
Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA)
Language Reference Group (LRG)
Local Government Forum (LGF)
Maanamak Murrup (A Comfortable Life)
Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)
Natural Resource Agreement (NRA)
North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA)
Notice of Intents (NOIs)
Participation Agreement (VTOTPA)
People and Workplace Culture (PWC)
Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA)
Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP)
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)
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:



Taungurung Land and Waters Council

TLaWC
22
YEARS

Ngun Godjin





