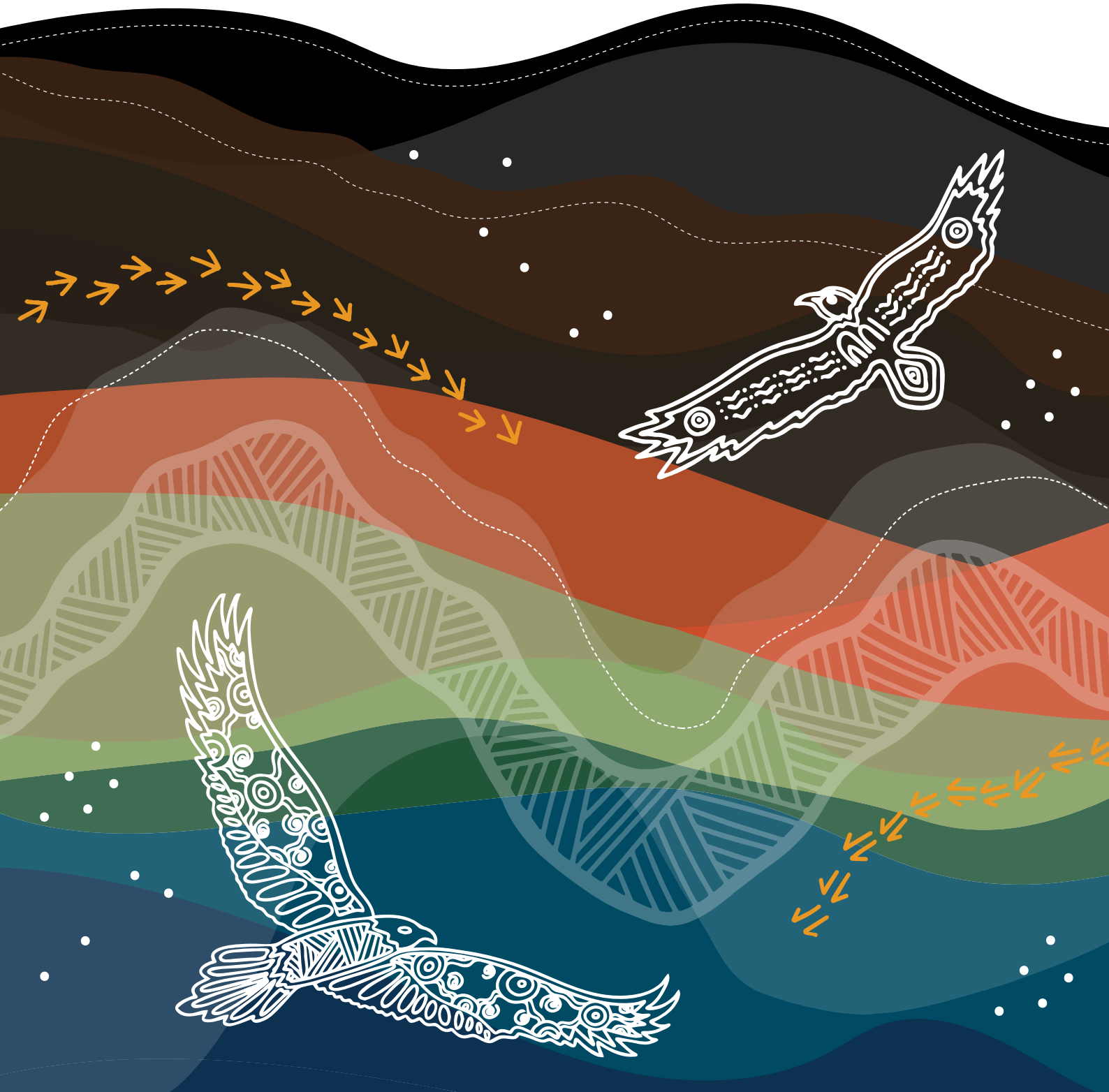
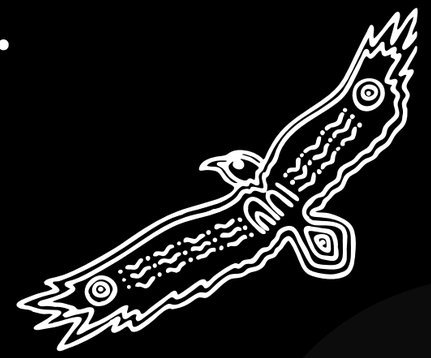
TAUNGURUNG LAND AND WATERS COUNCIL

TAUNGURUNG
LAND & WATERS COUNCIL

Annual Report 2025–2026







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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, Claire Barry, Kerstie Lee.

Artwork by Maddi Moser and Talitha Annusheit.
Design by Mazart Communications.

Aspiration

WHAT AUTHORISES TLAWC AND THE STANCE TAKEN AS A NATION

The Taungurung Nation asserts its sovereignty and thrives. Authority comes from Country, culture and community. Accountability is to Ancestors and future generations.

TLaWC acts through cultural authority, is empowered by culture and community, and upholds the collective will of the Taungurung people. It is distinct from government or external mandate.

Vision

WHERE TAUNGURUNG IS HEADING AND WHAT 2030 LOOKS LIKE IN PRACTICE

By 2030, the Taungurung Nation remains self-determining, with a stronger, united voice and governance that gives full expression to sovereignty in action.



Purpose

WHO TLAWC IS AND WHY IT EXISTS

TLaWC exists to serve the Nation by upholding cultural authority, caring for and healing Country and strengthening the collective capacity of Taungurung people to ensure prosperity for generations to come.



Values

HOW DECISIONS ARE MADE AND HOW TLAWC BEHAVES EVERY DAY

CARE FOR COUNTRY AND CULTURE	We protect and nurture Country, practise culture and carry the wisdom of Elders.
INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY	We act transparently, take responsibility and remain accountable to Ancestors, community and future generations.
UNITY AND LEADERSHIP	We collaborate with respect and safety, grow together and develop leaders for the future of the Nation.
RESILIENCE AND WELLBEING	We stand strong, support each other and uphold the wellbeing of Taungurung people and community.

STRATEGIC *Pillars*

THE FOCUS AREAS THAT ORGANISE WORK TOWARD THE VISION

	FOCUS AREA	OBJECTIVE
1	**NATION REBUILDING AND SELF-DETERMINATION**	Build an economically independent and sovereign Taungurung Nation.
2	**CULTURAL AND COUNTRY RESPONSIBILITIES**	Strengthen collective understanding of Country and uphold cultural obligations.
3	**PRIDE, UNITY, EDUCATION AND NATIONHOOD IDENTITY**	Strengthen identity and unity among Taungurung people.
4	**STRONG AND ACCOUNTABLE ORGANISATION**	Build TLaWC into a leading Traditional Owner institution with integrity, capability and cultural accountability.

CHAIRPERSON *Report*

Wawa yumaagu,

It is my pleasure to present the Taungurung Land and Waters Council's 2025–2026 Annual Report. Each year, this report provides an opportunity to reflect on how far we've come as an organisation and, more importantly, what that progress means for our people, culture and Country. This year has been another significant one for TLaWC. We've continued to grow, strengthen our foundations and create opportunities for Taungurung people to connect with Country, culture and each other. I'm incredibly proud of what we've achieved together and excited about the direction we're heading.

One of our most significant achievements this year was the launch of our new Strategic Plan 2026–2030. The development of this plan provided an important opportunity to reflect on the considerable progress we've made since 2020, while having meaningful conversations about our aspirations for the future. At its heart, the plan is about strengthening the Taungurung Nation and ensuring our people have the authority, resources and opportunities to determine our own future. Our vision for 2030 is ambitious, as it should be. We want to see a sovereign and self-determining Taungurung Nation, where our obligations to Country are actively upheld, our culture and identity continue to flourish, and future generations are empowered to lead. Importantly, achieving this vision requires a strong, accountable and culturally grounded organisation that our community can trust. The four strategic pillars outlined in the plan provide a clear direction for the next five years, but a Strategic Plan is only as good as the outcomes it delivers. As a Board, our responsibility is to ensure these aspirations translate into meaningful action and lasting benefits for Taungurung people.



We invited Taungurung people to contribute designs for a new organisational logo, receiving more than 30 submissions. Following an initial assessment, six designs were put to a community vote, with a record number of members participating. The successful design came from proud Taungurung man Iluka Sax-Williams and, following further refinement, now features Bundjil and Waang flying over the mountains and rivers of Taungurung Country. I think it's particularly fitting that, as we look towards a new chapter for our organisation, our community has played such a central role in shaping how we represent ourselves. My congratulations and thanks go to Talitha, Iluka and everyone who contributed their creativity and ideas. While our strategic direction and organisational growth are important, the strength of our Nation will always come from our people and our connection to Country.

Another deadly milestone this year has been the refresh of TLaWC's visual identity, bringing our branding into alignment with the next chapter of our journey. What makes this particularly special is that the artwork and design have come directly from our community. Following an Expression of Interest process, the work of Taungurung artist Talitha Annuschiet was selected to guide our refreshed branding. Building on the visual identity established over the previous five years, the new artwork brings a vibrant expression of our culture and connection to Country.

One of my personal highlights this year has been seeing the continued success of our Taungurung Berrgan Community Camps. Since introducing the new format last year, we've seen participation double, with more families coming together on Country to connect, share knowledge, participate in cultural activities and simply enjoy spending time together. For me, these weekends are a reminder of why the work we do matters. Seeing our Elders, young people and families together on Country, strengthening relationships and creating memories that will carry through generations, is something really special. I want to acknowledge the staff who put so much work into making these camps welcoming and engaging for our community. If you haven't yet had the opportunity to attend a Berrgan camp, I strongly encourage you to come along.

This year also provided another powerful reminder of the importance of truth-telling and our collective journey towards justice and Treaty. Following Travis Lovett's historic Walk for Truth in 2025, the 2026 Walk held particular significance for our Nation as it travelled through Taungurung Country. On the third day of the Walk, the handover of the Message Stick from Wurundjeri Biik to Taungurung Biik was an important moment of cultural connection and solidarity. I want to acknowledge Travis for his continued leadership and commitment to truth-telling, and the Taungurung people who participated, including Matthew Shanks and representatives of TLaWC. Their involvement reflects the important role our Nation continues to play in the broader movement towards justice and self-determination.

This year also marked the beginning of a new chapter for the TLaWC Board. It was encouraging to see so many Taungurung people put their hands up to serve as Directors. Welcoming new voices alongside experienced Board members brings fresh perspectives and ideas, while maintaining the knowledge and continuity needed to guide the organisation. As we embark on the next five years of our Strategic Plan, strong governance and accountability will remain central to our work. Our community places considerable trust in those elected to represent them, and it is a responsibility I know our Directors take seriously.

We also had the opportunity this year to recognise the extraordinary contribution of those who have served our Nation through their roles on the Board. At a special celebration held during a Berrgan Community Camp, alongside the launch of our Strategic Plan and the fifth anniversary of the Taungurung flag, we acknowledged the service milestones of Aunty Patsy Smith (20 years), Aunty Jacqui Stewart (10 years), Aunty Bernadette Franklin (5 years), Aunty Loraine Padgham (5 years), Uncle Stephen Walsh (5 years), Marcus Stewart AM (5 years), Alex Burns (5 years), Grant Hansen (5 years) and Isobel Morphy-Walsh (5 years). We also recognised the late Uncle Gary Hansen, who sadly passed in 2024, for his five years of service. I want to sincerely thank each of these individuals for the time, energy and commitment they have given to our Nation. Serving on the Board comes with significant responsibilities, difficult decisions and a commitment to putting the interests of our community first. The contribution of those who have served before us has helped build the organisation we have today, and we owe them a great deal of gratitude.

As I reflect on the past year, what stands out most is the strength of our community and the opportunities that lie ahead. We have achieved a great deal, but there is still plenty of work to do. Our focus must remain on building an organisation that is accountable to our people, strengthening our cultural authority and ensuring the opportunities we create today deliver lasting benefits for future generations. I want to thank my fellow Board Directors for their commitment and leadership, and CEO Matthew Burns, the leadership team and all TLaWC staff for their continued hard work and dedication to the Taungurung Nation. Most importantly, thank you to our Elders, members and broader Taungurung community. Your knowledge, contributions and continued involvement in the future of our Nation are what make this work possible.

Our future is ours to shape, and I look forward to continuing that journey together. I look forward to seeing you all out on Country soon.





Kaley Nicholson

CEO Report

TLaWC's first steps within a new Strategic Plan were informed by the Board of Directors and built through engagement with the Taungurung community. This led much of the work across another productive financial year, balancing diligent work in the present with a preparedness for the future.

Partnerships with other organisations to realise best outcomes for Taungurung Country were displayed through multiple MoUs and projects, such as connecting with Cassinia to protect the future of the Greenslopes location in Trawool (see page 35). Connecting with partners that are focused on caring for Country, respecting Taungurung community and uniting for positive outcomes continues to be one of the primary methods of growth in achieving change and progressing the goals set out in the Strategic Plan. The CESG framework went live in late 2025 and aligns with this sentiment, defining the process to achieve healthy partnering with developers in the Renewable Energy space. The focus here is on new renewable energy projects seeking to connect to the grid, engage with Traditional Owners in self-determined ways and directly negotiate benefit-sharing arrangements (see page 24).

By the time you're reading this, the first Mountains to Rivers Festival will have taken place at Tahbilk Estate following more than a year of planning and preparation by staff across the organisation. While the actual event was not within the reported financial year, it is essential to highlight the both the internal working group and the Creators Circle for their continued ideas and involvement to create a new Taungurung-focused event supported by the Victorian Government. wawa biik has been such a strong source of advocacy and generates involvement from partners and the wider community, and a festival is a natural extension of these tours to bring more people together in one setting. We will continue to seek innovative ways to engage with the wider community in caring for Country.

Providing the foundations for future generations is a core part of TLaWC's role, and the Yumaa Yuwang program is another initiative investing in Taungurung youth. TLaWC and Ganbina combined to launch the program, which strengthens learning and career pathways through education support. Yumaa Yuwang has so far supported 17 Taungurung students between Grade 6 and Year 9 with an education scholarship. This is a first step in helping Taungurung families with some of the costs associated with commencing secondary school and in the critical years following (see page 12).

In Treaty, TLaWC was pleased to announce that Isobel Morphy-Walsh had been successfully elected as the next Taungurung Representative to the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria following a vote from the TLaWC membership. The Taungurung community firmly declared intention to lead local Treaty-making for Taungurung Country by joining the Treaty Negotiations Register. In March 2026, a meeting of the Taungurung Full Group determined to take the first official steps for a Taungurung Country specific Treaty – entering the Treaty Negotiations Register and establishing the work to create a First Peoples Treaty Delegation. TLaWC recorded interviews with a range of Taungurung people to gather their thoughts on the Treaty process in a program called 'Talking Treaty'. Providing a platform for community to have a say on Treaty is essential, which extended to yarns and presentations at camps and events. TLaWC is proud to be supporting the Taungurung Nation in this important work, with more detailed in the Treaty section (page 25).

The many important works and projects on Taungurung Country are highlighted in this Annual Report. While not all can be addressed here, the following summaries note some of the substantial progress seen this year:

- TLaWC has long required a program that assists with productivity and project management. ClickUp was launched to staff as a platform designed to consolidate tasks, documents, goals, and chats into a single workspace. This work is in its early stages and will have greater reporting on its use in the next financial year.
- Caring for Biik forums seek to bring together previous Reading Country events with the work of Knowledge Circles such as Baan Ganalina and the Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle. The aim is to build knowledge about all aspects of Country and water to support holistic decision making. These forums see Taungurung Elders, youth, community and TLaWC staff representing important projects on Country.
- The Corop Wetlands project's phase 2 was discussed in the previous Annual Report. Now it is within its final year following the establishment of a governance structure, actively exploring the healing of Country at three pilot sites, and a Corop summit event that brought partners together to feed into the Healthy Country Plans for the region.
- Negotiations with Southern Cross Gold (SXG) continue to progress following community endorsement for the negotiating team to commence formal discussions regarding the proposed Sunday Creek Mine project. TLaWC has now provided SXG with an offer outlining expectations. Engagement with advisors, legal counsel and community representatives remain ongoing.

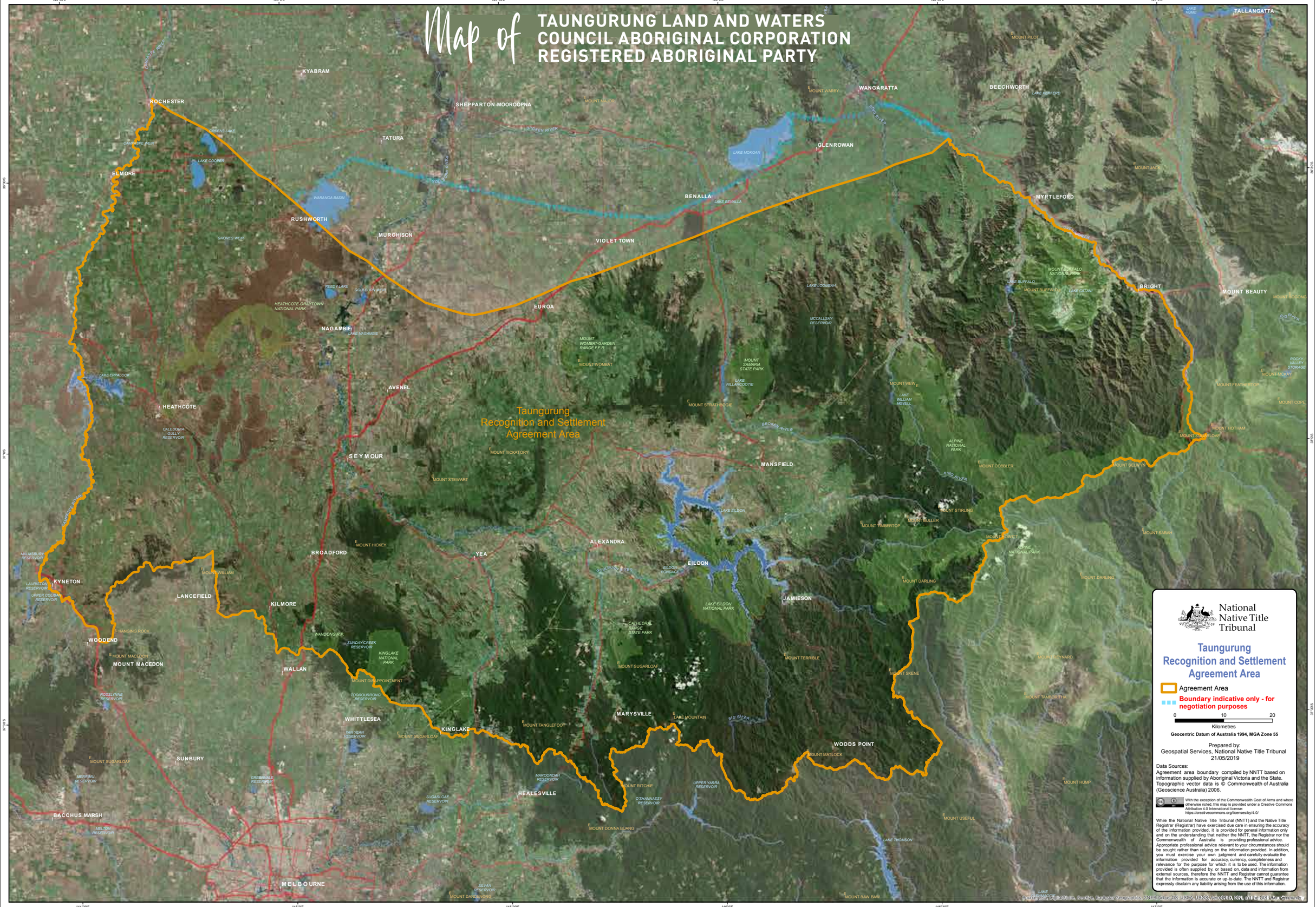
Progress across 25/26 was not without its challenges, with the Native Title Claim process and decision deeply impacting people both within and long associated with the Taungurung community. Many relationships have been built over the past 20 years through TLaWC, and this outcome saw significant change across the membership. But all decisions were made with care, and with the future of the Taungurung people and our next generations front of mind.

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.



Matt Burns

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



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.

With the exception of the Commonwealth Coat of Arms and where otherwise noted, this map is provided under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license: https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/

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.

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Geotrack Number: GT2018/1427



Highlights

CESG FRAMEWORK

In August 2025, the Cultural, Environmental, Social, Governance (CESG) Certification Framework went live as the key process to engage with TLaWC for proponents seeking to develop large-scale projects on Taungurung Country. The CESG Framework defines the process to achieve healthy partnering with developers, including the negotiation of Access and Benefit-sharing Agreements.

TLAWC NURSERY

The TLaWC Nursery - Wunwarren Yanggardi (meaning 'green, lush, rich growth walkabout' in Taungurung language) – was built in late 2025 at TLaWC's operations depot in Nihil Street, Alexandra. Wunwarren Yanggardi is owned by TLaWC - specialising in growing bush tucker and fibre plants that can be found specifically on Taungurung Country while also growing plants to contribute to the restoration and protection of the natural environment.

YUMAA YUWANG

The Yumaa Yuwang program commenced in 2026 with Ganbina – an organisation empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people across the region with support in education, training and life skills. After reaching out to the Taungurung community and visiting students across Taungurung Country and beyond, 17 Taungurung students participated in the program under a scholarship. The team met and welcomed each student into the program with a small gift. So far, students have attended events and camps as well as a leadership day out in the city via the wawa biik bus. This included visiting the North Melbourne Football Club to take part in the Huddle program, your facilities, watch AFLW training and have lunch with staff and players. Seeing all the students interact and build relationships during events has been rewarding for all involved, with further expressions of interest opening soon.

Berrgan Community Camps











COMMUNITY *Engagement*

GUARDIANS OF CULTURE

The Language Program focuses on supporting the use of Taungurung language across community, education and TLaWC events. A key achievement was the establishment of the Guardians of Culture – Language Lead role. Having a dedicated Language Lead provides the opportunity to build the program and give language a stronger place across TLaWC and within community. The Language Lead will also support the re-establishment of the Language Reference Group (LRG) through an EOI process to provide Taungurung people with an opportunity to progress all matters related to language revitalisation. Work has continued in the creation of the revised Taungurung language dictionary and ensuring both language and knowledge are protected through the right ICIP arrangements. This is important work to make sure Taungurung language stays with Taungurung people and is shared in the right way.



EDUCATION PROGRAM

With the Koori Curriculum Clusters Program completed in gaining partnerships with schools on Taungurung Country, the Education Program has continued to look at new opportunities for Taungurung children and young people to connect with culture. A key part of the Education Program has been the Yumaa Yuwang (share together) Scholarships, with 17 students involved in the last financial year (more on page 12). The program provides practical support to Taungurung students while also creating opportunities to build leadership, cultural connection and future pathways. Work has also continued in developing information for schools and education settings, including engaging with Taungurung artists and cultural knowledge holders to build resources that reflect culture and perspectives. The Education Program has connected closely with other areas of TLaWC to create opportunities for young people to be involved in dance, language, storytelling and learning on Country. The team will continue to build relationships with schools and education providers, seeking new initiatives to support Taungurung children and young people through education and culture.





CULTURAL DELIVERY

Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremonies were delivered across Country, representing Taungurung culture at a range of events and gatherings. There have also been cultural education sessions delivered across schools, day care centres and kindergartens, giving children and educators the opportunity to learn about Taungurung culture, stories and knowledge. A core part of this has been the hands-on cultural activities, including the creation of artefacts for the social housing project, Caring for Country forums and the Berrgan Community Camps. Sharing culture in practical ways and for Taungurung community and wider community involvement is key to passing on knowledge to younger generations.

EVENTS

Berrgan Community Camps

The Berrgan Community Camps have grown significantly over the past year and continue to be an important space for Taungurung community to come together on Country. Numbers have increased from 30 members in late 2025 to approximately 70–80 members at the latest camp. This growth shows how strongly community values a regular place to come together, spend time with each other and be involved in culture. TLaWC also been fortunate to use the Dardi Munwurro Kallara Conference Centre in the Strathbogie Shire, which has provided a great space for the camps and has helped create a stronger feeling of community coming together. The focus at camps has moved more towards cultural teaching and knowledge sharing. Young people have taken part in dance sessions, while Elders and Knowledge Holders have had the opportunity to share their stories and their own learning experiences with community. The next financial year will create further cultural learning through language, dance, adornment making and other cultural practices. Most importantly, this is for Elders and Knowledge Holders to share and teach with the next generation of Taungurung people.



Dhum Gaab (Yarn Up)

Dhum Gaab has continued to grow as a space for staff, community and external partners to come together, have a yarn and build relationships. With an Events Coordinator commencing in September 2025 and working alongside the Community Engagement Manager, Dhum Gaabs have provided a regular chance for people to take some time out, connect with one another and network in a relaxed setting. The Dhum Gaab have included a range of themes and activities across the year, including Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week, school holiday activities, AFL and Dance of the Bogong Moth. These themed events have provided a good mix of culture, fun, food and conversation and have become a staple that staff, community and partners look forward to. A core aspect of Dhum Gaab has also been the food. The team has placed emphasis on freshly cooked catering for each event. Sharing good food and having a yarn has helped create the relaxed and welcoming feel that makes Dhum Gaab so inviting.

Elders Advisory Council

The establishment of the Elders Advisory Council has been an important step for the organisation, creating a dedicated space for Elders to have a voice in the direction of TLaWC. The first meetings have focused on establishing the Council, understanding its role and talking through Eldership, ceremony and cultural responsibilities. The Council will now work towards setting its future priorities and building a strong working relationship with the Board and TLaWC. This is an important opportunity to strengthen the role of Elders within the organisation and ensure their experience and knowledge continue to inform the work we do.







wawa biik

wawa biik
(hello Country)

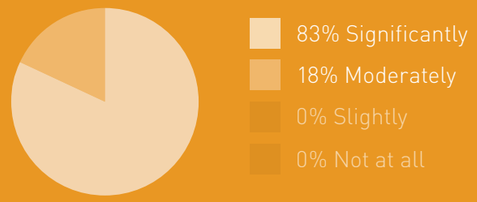
wawa biik offers immersive, educational cultural experiences that honour Taungurung stories and contribute to the positive future of Taungurung Culture and Country. wawa biik is owned and operated by TLaWC, delivering tours for school groups, organisations and community groups seeking to deepen their understanding of Country, Taungurung living culture and the aspirations of Taungurung people today. The past year has also marked a period of change for the wawa biik team, farewelling several key members who made significant contributions to the organisation's development and success. The cultural leadership of wawa biik's current guides sees a continuation to share knowledge, stories and connection to Country with generosity and authenticity. Leadership has been central to wawa biik's ability to deliver exceptional cultural experiences and consistently high levels of visitor satisfaction.

Now in the fourth year of operations, wawa biik has reached an important point in its evolution. With funding support from DJSIR, work has commenced on a Cultural Experiences Impact Plan – a roadmap to guide the sustainable future and continued development of wawa biik. Consultation with community and stakeholders has reinforced that wawa biik is more than a tourism experience. This is an important platform for sharing living culture, supporting intergenerational knowledge transfer, strengthening cultural understanding and building meaningful relationships with communities, organisations and stakeholders. This period of reflection and refinement provides an opportunity to strengthen wawa biik's foundations and clarify its future direction. Through the Cultural Experiences Impact Plan, wawa biik will continue to build a sustainable model that creates positive and lasting impact for Country, community and culture.

STATS & SURVEY RESULTS

642	Number of visitors
39	Total number of cultural experiences
40	Post tour surveys received

Participants were asked to what extent the cultural experience contributed to an increased understanding of the Taungurung Nation and their future aspirations for Country.



"I found this experience invaluable and really opened my eyes to the rich cultural history of First Nations people. Our guides Aunty Anne and Aunty Jo were both so welcoming and eager to share their stories, traditions and experiences with us. I can confidently say this was one of the most memorable experiences I have had after coming to Australia."

Esther, wawa Euroa



MOUNTAINS TO RIVERS FESTIVAL

wawa biik presents its inaugural Mountains to Rivers Festival in 2026. This is a one-day, family-friendly celebration inviting people to experience the living culture of the Taungurung Nation. The festival will be held at Tahbilk Winery Estate, known to Taungurung people as tabilk tabilk – the place of many waterholes. Inspired by the theme Biik Nganyin Datbu (Caring for our Country) the festival celebrates the enduring relationship between Taungurung people and Country through talks, live music, cultural cruises through the wetlands, workshops and immersive activities for children and families. The festival represents an exciting new opportunity for wawa biik to broaden its reach, create new pathways for cultural engagement and provide a platform for Taungurung knowledge, creativity and cultural expression.

CULTURAL COMPETENCY PROGRAMS

wawa biik is developing a suite of cultural competency programs for businesses and organisations seeking to strengthen their understanding of Taungurung culture and connection to Country, while supporting their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) outcomes. These programs will provide organisations with meaningful opportunities to build cultural capability, strengthen relationships with Taungurung people and embed a deeper understanding of Country and culture within their workplaces. More details will be shared in the coming year.

www.wawabiik.com.au
hello@wawabiik.com.au





MOUNTAINS TO RIVERS FESTIVAL 2026

PEOPLE & 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. The yearly staff satisfaction survey yielded positive results and provided useful feedback for implementation into the organisation. This also benefits new employees, with 25 people recruited across the financial year into new or existing roles. In the workplace health and safety space, incident reporting, return-to-work processes, emergency preparedness and manager responsibilities are the core areas of operation – with the health and wellbeing of staff always top priority. Following on from this, organisational risk management is supported by a Risk Management Framework and the recently established Risk Committee. This sees clearer risk ownership and greater accuracy in the use of the risk register. Child safety remains at the forefront with many TLaWC events including the participation and attendance of children. All staff are now required to hold a voluntary Working With Children Check, while accessibility and inclusive approaches to organisational and community events are adopted in the planning phase. Other projects of note include:

- improving workforce systems, onboarding, induction, compliance records and employee documentation
- supporting leadership capabilities, performance conversations and manager confidence in managing people, and safety and risk matters
- implementing and refining the Compensation Guide to support fair, transparent and sustainable employment practices
- supporting teams through organisational change and clarifying responsibilities where structures or roles have shifted
- Overall, TLaWC has moved from developing foundational frameworks to embedding safety, risk and governance practices across the organisation.



74	Employees
24	Taungurung
3	Indigenous
47	Non-Indigenous
34	Males
38	Females
2	Non-Binary
45	Full Time
19	Part Time
10	Casual



Finance

TLaWC's Finance team provides financial planning, analysis and management support across the organisation's broad range of activities. The team has been involved in ongoing advocacy work to improve TLaWC's funding situation. TLaWC participated in research during the year by compiling operational and funding datasets. A consultant brought together data from across various organisations to produce a final report that estimated Traditional Owner Corporations are underfunded by approximately $1.8m per annum to deliver on statutory and legislative duties alone. The team's expertise has covered the following:

- Providing support to the many projects and initiatives throughout the year, including Treaty, Caring for Biik Forums, community camps and detailed long-term projects such as Corop Cultural Waterscape and Stone Country (detailed further into the Annual Report)
- Navigating ongoing changes to legislation, including the transition to payday superannuation which was implemented early to provide a smooth transition. This ensures TLaWC is compliant with legislation with no disruption to staff superannuation payments
- Establishing the enabling structures of the TOLMB (page 44) in preparation for its establishment. The governance mechanisms needed for the TOLMB include ways of operating, agreements between service providers, future data capture and reporting needs.
- During the year TLaWC made its first direct investment into Yurringa Energy, Australia's first Indigenous-owned energy retailer:

  Matthew Burns, TLaWC CEO said *'TLaWC is investing in the here and now, but also for long-term generational economic outcomes. We are considering a range of renewable energy and critical minerals opportunities on Taungurung Country and see a First Nations-owned retail energy company as a vital piece of the energy transition jigsaw.'*

SOCIAL *Housing*

TLaWC has progressed Maanamak Murrup: a social housing project in Kyneton on Taungurung Country. Maanamak Murrup is Taungurung language for a comfortable spirit, 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. Planning and design have progressed for the 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 RAP team to identify, respect and protect cultural values throughout planning and delivery. The project's civil, urban and landscape design has advanced, with a clear focus on being grounded in Taungurung culture. Culturally appropriate housing that supports the Taungurung community to live on Taungurung Country is the ultimate goal. The plan is to break ground in 2027 during a ceremony on-site to mark the start of works. This will be an opportunity for the Taungurung community and stakeholders to come together to share in the progress of the site.



Communications

TLaWC's communications team has continued to lead the messaging, branding and visuals of the organisation through a range of new and updated projects. The Communications Manual – which provides clear guidelines to staff in matters such as style, approved use of imagery, logos, branding and colour – was updated in late 2025 during simultaneous work on a new brand for the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan period. The team worked with multiple Taungurung artists across the financial year to realise a range of design opportunities, including the change of the TLaWC logo. This was led by a community vote and continued work with the artist to achieve the end result. The staff newsletter had its first full year of operation, bringing organisational news and updates to staff in an entertaining format. A communications survey was distributed internally to analyse current use of systems and the ability to extract information across TLaWC for use in external and internal storytelling. The results demonstrated a highly positive view of communications in general and provided a good base for new initiatives to bridge any gaps. In early 2026, communications managers from Traditional Owner Corporations (TOCs) across Victoria started a monthly check-in to assist with media enquiries and general messaging. This has been a beneficial addition to ensure successes and challenges can be shared. The communications team has been integral to the advertising and marketing of the Mountains to Rivers Festival, ensuring the campaign reached as many potential attendees as possible through a separate brand and visual identity. Videography was undertaken across the organisation to record core projects such as Country Speaks, Treaty interviews and events in a culturally respectful manner.

OFFICE OF THE CEO

The Office of the CEO team provides governance and executive support across TLaWC, leading the systems and processes for the Board, CEO, ELT and Senior Leadership Team (SLT) to make informed decisions and keep the organisation moving forward. During the year, the SLT was established to strengthen leadership collaboration and provide greater focus on organisational priorities and key projects. New ways of working were also introduced to improve communication and visibility across the organisation, including monthly CEO updates for staff and improved reporting on organisational priorities and commitments. The team also introduced TLaWC's mentoring program, receiving 10 applications from staff seeking to participate as mentors and mentees. The program created new opportunities for professional development, knowledge sharing and leadership growth across the organisation. The Office of the CEO played a central role in driving governance across TLaWC. This included implementing recommendations from governance and legal health check reviews, delivering updated policies and charters, and supporting the effectiveness of Board and Committee operations. The work strengthened accountability and improved decision-making across the organisation. Throughout the year, the Office of the CEO expanded its capability to provide both governance and corporate support across TLaWC. Alongside improving organisational systems and processes, the team enhanced coordination of executive and administrative functions, supported organisational reporting, and implemented tools such as the ClickUp software to improve visibility of priorities and actions. This work strengthened accountability and helped keep key projects and commitments moving forward. The team ensures leaders have the information, support and structures needed to make decisions and deliver outcomes for the Taungurung community.

RENEWABLE *Energy*

In August 2025, the Cultural, Environmental, Social, Governance (CESG) Certification Framework went live as the key process of engagement with TLaWC for proponents seeking to develop large-scale projects on Taungurung Country. The CESG Framework is a method to achieve healthy partnering with developers, including the negotiation of Access and Benefit-sharing Agreements. After an initial trial period with two developers, the Renewable Futures team has been working with 11 developers proposing developments on Taungurung Country. The CESG Framework is supported by new Guidelines from VicGrid, with expectations that new renewable energy projects seeking to connect to the grid engage with Traditional Owners in self-determined ways and directly negotiate benefit-sharing arrangements.

The Renewable Futures Strategy has progressed and will launch in late 2026. This Strategy will guide the evolution of the Renewable Futures team and the focus of project delivery and alignment with the broader renewable energy transition. The team has supported broader policy positions, adding input into the launches of the SEC's First Peoples Self-Determination Strategy and DEECA's First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan. The team continues to engage in workshops with VicGrid on the development of the Renewable Energy Zones and Victorian Access Regime anticipated to commence in 2027, and the Victorian Transmission Plan (VTP) 2027.

TLaWC has entered an agreement with Reswitch – a service platform that combines benefit-sharing payments from developers – and can use these payments to provide energy bill rebates to TLaWC members. This program is being actively developed and is expected to go live in 2026-27.

GRANTS

This year saw the installation of a battery and EV charger at the Alexandra Office, funded through the AusNet Services Energy Resilience Community Fund (ERCF). The battery, coupled with existing solar, means the site can run off grid when the power goes out to provide business continuity for TLaWC and resilience for TLaWC members and local community during sustained outages. The battery demonstrated its usefulness during the fires in January 2026, providing support to emergency workers and staff alike. A community launch was held in March to celebrate project outcomes.

Another grant in progress is the First Peoples Solar and Storage Initiative (FPSSI) which has funded the installation of solar, batteries and an EV charger at the TLaWC Alexandra depot. In addition, solar and batteries will be installed at a second site of a partner or business, where the aim is to add renewable energy, lower onsite costs and financial gain for TLaWC. The Renewable Futures team is currently working alongside a technical advisor to ensure the best project delivery outcome and partner for the second site.

In addition, the team were successful in several other grant funding applications this year, including the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR) Community Led Climate Solutions Program, the Community Power Agency (CPA) Community Energy Incubator, and the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEW) First Nations Clean Energy Advice Grants. These grants will assist the team in growing TLaWC's capability and reputation as a partner in supporting the development and ownership of community energy projects in the region.

Treaty

In 2026, the Taungurung Community firmly declared intention to lead local Treaty-making for Taungurung Country by joining the Treaty Negotiations Register. A meeting of the Taungurung Full Group determined to take the first official steps for a Taungurung Country specific Treaty – entering the Treaty Negotiations Register and establishing the work to create a First Peoples Treaty Delegation. These are two major steps in the Traditional Owner Treaty Journey which must be completed before negotiations with the State can commence.
To get to this point, the Taungurung community had met many times to discuss and determine Taungurung priorities for Treaty-making. Elders, youth and community members across genders, interests and experience have come together to discuss what is important to the Taungurung Nation and how goals might be achieved through Treaties. To assist, important relationships have been built with the Treaty Authority, First Peoples Assembly and *Gellung Warl*, the Self-Determination Fund and Yoorrook Justice Commission. TLaWC is proud to be supporting the Taungurung Nation in the important work towards Treaties for Taungurung Country.

The First Statewide Treaty was signed and came into being in December 2025. The first Treaty agreement anywhere across the continent of Australia, this document paves the way for stronger inclusion of First Nations People in the business of the State which will have positive outcomes for all Victorians. As a direct outcome of the treaty, a new First Nations Statutory Body, Gullung Warl has been established. Elections for the third sitting of the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria (now incorporated within *Gellung Warl*) were held. TLaWC members elected Isobel Morphy-Walsh as the Taungurung Representative Member. TLaWC Member, Aunty Esme Bamblett was also elected for the Metro Region. Thank you to Kaley Nicholson who served as the Taungurung Treaty Representative until the hand-over in May. The work of Treaty-making – both Statewide and those specifically for Taungurung Country – will enable improvements which all Victorians can share in. TLaWC is who are walking together with us in this journey, and look forward for increased opportunities for Allys – individuals and organisations – to participate in Treaty business as the work continues.



A TREATY IS AN AGREEMENT WHICH ESTABLISHES THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATIONS.

It can include issues such as:

- How the laws, lores and cultures of each Nation relates to each-other, how and where they will be accommodated and respected.
- Access and sharing of land and resources.
- Methods for communications, relating and review.

In Victoria, Treaty is an opportunity to better establish a relationship of mutuality and respect between First Peoples and the State. Treaties can enable:

- The goals of Traditional Owner Nations, such as healthy Country, Culture and Communities,
- Truth-telling, acknowledgement and reparation
- New ways of doing things between the State and First Peoples which have benefits to all Victorians



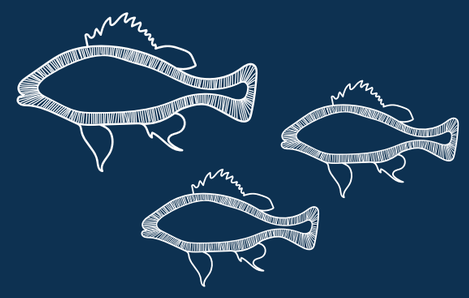
PARTNERSHIPS & *Agreements*

The Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) provides procedural rights to the Taungurung people for activities undertaken on public land across Taungurung Country. The agreement area is defined in the Recognition Settlement Agreement (RSA). The Partnerships and Agreements team continues to refine processes in a dynamic environment to facilitate TLaWC's involvement and decision-making in future uses of public land.

42 Earth Resources Exploration and Retention Licences are managed with the assistance of the Earth Resources Regulator - the state government unit responsible for regulating exploration, mining, quarrying, petroleum, geothermal and carbon storage activities in Victoria. All licences are invoiced for access fees annually under LUAA processes. Currently, the team is in negotiations with another six exploration licence applicants, equating to negotiations with over 25 individual exploration/mining companies. 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.

170 total notifications are broken up as follows:

- 9 Negotiation Type B Notifications
- 1 Agreement Activity Notification
- 160 Advisory Notifications



The team conducted 12 Site Inspections consisting of both pre-works and post-work inspections and assessed and responded to a total of 170 'works on land' or 'public land authorisation' notifications. 135 notifications were received from the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA), our major notification provider.

Community benefits from Negotiation Type B "works on land" activities with State Departments will be calculated and confirmed with the signing of the Deed of Agreement and settlement of disputes. Funds are to be held in 'Trust' pending re-registration of the Indigenous Land Use Agreement (ILUA). It is anticipated that the release of funds will not be contemplated until the conclusion of the Taungurung Native Title claim. TLaWC is therefore unlikely to see community benefit funds released from State proponents for some years. The team is in negotiations with the State to set up a Trust account to hold these funds.

BIOCULTURAL
Landscapes

The Biocultural Landscapes Department brings together four core teams:

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

These teams interconnect to see a range of positive outcomes achieved through ongoing collaboration and regular engagement on significant projects across Taungurung Country.





BIOCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE *Emergence*

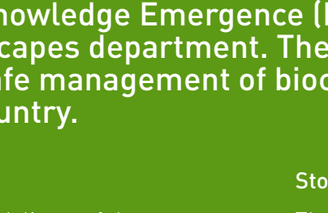
The Biocultural Knowledge Emergence (BKE) team sits within the Biocultural Landscapes department. The role is to support the emergence and safe management of biocultural knowledge related to Taungurung Country.

Caring for Biik Forums

BKE has been supporting delivery of the new Caring for Biik Forums. These forums seek to bring together previous Reading Country events with the work of Knowledge Circles such as Baan Ganalina and the Forest and Fire Knowledge Circle. The aim is to build knowledge about all aspects of Country and water to support holistic decision making. The program began with forums focused on the Nanadhong, Corop and Waring Cultural Landscapes. One of the highlights has been working with the Ranger program. Discussing the management of cultural landscapes with young Taungurung people is inspiring to all involved, especially with a move into the activation of the Traditional Owner Land Management Board (TOLMB) and future management of the Taungurung Aboriginal Title Parks. The team will review the structure and timing of these forums to ensure that the right opportunities for Taungurung people are available to continue to support Cultural Land Management projects.

Stone Country Cultural Landscape

The team launched the Stone Country Cultural Landscape Project in the past year. Stone Country is the culmination of many years of advocacy from TLaWC in relation to management rights over the state forests of the Strathbogie Ranges. The result of this advocacy has been the rematriation of management rights over former areas of State Forest under the Australian first category of Indigenous Cultural Reserve. This designation provides a framework for the exercise of Taungurung responsibilities and obligations to Stone Country. The project will be undertaken collaboratively with DEECA and community representatives of the Strathbogies. The project team aims to deliver two major pieces of work: developing and documenting a method for the management of cultural landscapes, and the development and ultimate implementation of forest management pilots. Work has focused on undertaking preliminary research and supporting DEECA to enter collaborative governance arrangements with TLaWC. This is now moving into a phase of collecting biocultural values and elevating the voice of community and Country.





Centre of Excellence, Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures

The partnership with the Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Futures (CEIHF) is moving into a new phase. After a period of outlining opportunities for Taungurung people to undertake Higher Degrees by Research, this now shifts focus to developing research programs to support Taungurung Cultural Land Management projects. The Corop and Stone Country Cultural Landscapes will benefit from research into past environments and archaeology which will provide a robust base for planning management actions to support healthy Country.



CULTURAL LAND *Management*

The CLM Team has had another very active year progressing key priorities. All work continues to be guided by the *Taungurung Cultural Land Management Strategy*, and its four pillars of Healing Knowledge, *Healing Country, Managing Country* and *Governing with Country*. These pillars are evident in each of the major initiatives, including current priority Cultural Landscapes, the highly innovative work on forest reform, and development of the Nyagaroon property.

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.







CULTURAL LAND MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS

The themed Programs respond to the four CLM Strategy pillars to deliver key outcomes. Further information on each Program is detailed in this report.

The Corop Wetlands Cultural Waterscape

The Corop Wetlands program is now in the final year of Phase 2: the Feasibility Phase. Key components of Phase 2 included establishment of the governance structure, including a Strategic Leadership Group (SLG), three active Working Groups and three Pilot sites. The SLG is a crucial oversight body which shapes 'right way' governing processes (informed by agreed Principles) and provides advice to guide strategic reform. The three Working Groups comprise members from across relevant partner organisations and the wider community and inform the SLG, each focusing on a different perspective. These are the Institutional Working Group, the Biocultural and Environmental Working Group and the Livelihoods Working Group. The groups have informed and supported substantial progress in the Program, particularly driving tangible actions on Country.

At the Corop Program's Pilot Sites (Reedy Lake, Gaynor Swamp and Greens Lake) the team has been actively exploring ways to heal Country. Tree planting, weeding, pest animal works and putting water into wetlands have been implemented at sites across the waterscape. Active monitoring of plants, animals, water quality, seed banks and acoustics have been conducted in partnership with other agencies and universities. TLaWC is planning for further actions, including putting 'leaky weirs' on drainage lines to slow the water down and allow it to seep into Country, implementing signage sharing Taungurung stories, creating shared agreements about water flows around wetlands, and planting cultural plants at wetlands and in the Whroo forest.

TLaWC held a Corop summit where partners came together to share biocultural and biophysical insights, connections and relationships. This information, together with the monitoring TLaWC's Biik team has been conducting in the waterscape, will feed into Healthy Country Plans for Corop. The Corop Speaking and Listening strategy, recently revised and updated, has been actively raising the visibility of and advocacy for the Corop Cultural Waterscape Program.



Cultural Water program

The Cultural Water Program has continued to expand and consolidate, with growing capacity to care for Baan (water) on Country in a culturally sound way. This included holding discussions with Taungurung community, undertaking tangible actions to heal water Country and demonstrate Taungurung leadership to the wider community, engaging with government programs, and carrying out self-initiated advocacy to further Taungurung policy goals in the water space. Key areas of focus this year have been Waring and Corop.

Staff continue to engage strongly with government partners and the wider community to start to demonstrably heal the wetlands of Waring. A highlight of this year has been ongoing work to care for Molesworth Billabongs. This has included TLaWC delivering water, for the second time, in March 2026. This Taungurung-led delivery is self-determination in action. Watering at Molesworth has been led exclusively by TLaWC as part of a pilot project supported by the Victorian Environmental Water Holder. As well as the watering, on-ground actions to heal the Molesworth billabongs include planting aquatic plants (2000 plants including some sourced from Biik nursery) and habitat works.

A new project working more widely across Waring is monitoring seasonal indicators for Water Country with TLaWC's BIIK team and Taungurung Rangers. This will study Molesworth Lagoons, Horseshoe Lagoon and other places within the Waring waterscape. At Horseshoe Lagoon, TLaWC again delivered water to the lagoon, which included the maintenance and addition of extra Turtle yilam (camps); floating islands which provide a nesting place for turtles where eggs are protected from foxes. Actions at Horseshoe lagoon are following the guidance of the Horseshoe Lagoon Healthy Country plan, which provides pathways for action, ongoing planning and learning.

The Cultural Water Program also continues to actively support the Corop Wetlands Cultural Waterscape program, receiving funding to develop a Healthy Country Plan for Greens Lake, an important component of the Corop project.





Private Land

TLaWC cares for the properties owned on Taungurung Country while planning for future development to support the aspirations of the Taungurung people. Each property presents different opportunities and challenges. Nyagaroon is the most active private land project and has achieved major successes this year, including the progression of infrastructure development at the site to support Taungurung community gatherings. After several years of exploring processes, the Minister for Planning endorsed the project with Clause 52:30 status. Clause 52.30 in the Victorian Planning Scheme designates projects as 'State Projects': a special planning provision that allows certain projects to be exempt from normal planning scheme requirements, subject to meeting specific criteria and approval. This is a welcome decision, though remains subject to many other requirements, permits and approvals. A key achievement was the completion and approval of a Cultural Heritage Land Management Plan (CHMP) for the Nyagaroon site and planned works. Stage 1 works to make the property accessible and safe have commenced, including work on the access track, plumbing and electrical works, and installation of an ablutions block. A funding application to the Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Program (ACIP) was successful, and collaboration across TLaWC is underway for the development of a community space to enable mob to gather and connect here.

Seasonal maintenance works continue to be undertaken across TLaWC's Cheshunt and Garden Range Properties, ensuring they are well maintained, safe and presented to a standard that reflects TLaWC's commitment to responsible stewardship. TLaWC has entered into a partnership agreement with Cassinia Environmental to support a collaborative approach to managing a property in the Trawool valley, a place which borders both Stone Country and Waring.

Cultural Forest Program

The Cultural Forest Program 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 past year has seen a range of both strategic and on-Country projects delivered, supporting the Program's Strategic Statement. Many of the Cultural Forest Programs' achievements are related to the strategic theme 'Ngarrap Biik (Forest Country) is known from top to bottom', a theme delivering against the 'healing knowledge' pillar of the CLM Strategy. Major achievements include the delivery of biocultural assessments, development of innovative frameworks, and the initiation of research partnerships. A highlight was the completion of the Whroo Forest Rapid Biocultural Assessment. This was a complex assessment and a key deliverable for the Cultural Forests Program. This report represents a key Taungurung statement of sovereignty and emergence of biocultural values in relation to the Yirrip (box-Ironbark) forests found on Taungurung Country. It is an important contribution to the Corop Wetlands Cultural Waterscape program.

The Program also delivered the Rushworth Collaborative Forest Management Planning Pilot. TLaWC partnered with DEECA Loddon-Mallee on a pilot project in the 2,700-ha Rushworth State Forest to embed Taungurung biocultural values into forest management planning. The pilot generated a draft methodology with potential for application across Taungurung Country and other Victorian public lands. This 'two worlds' approach to a new way for managing forests lands at an historic moment in how forests are managed in Victoria. The team delivered a series of presentations, in multiple relevant contexts, and created and shared a fact sheet describing the project. As expressed in the Cultural and Country Obligations pillar of TLaWC's strategic plan, TLaWC encourages partners to explore a two-worlds approach to decision-making and project implementation, where decision-making power is more equally balanced and there is an improved ability to see each other's perspective.

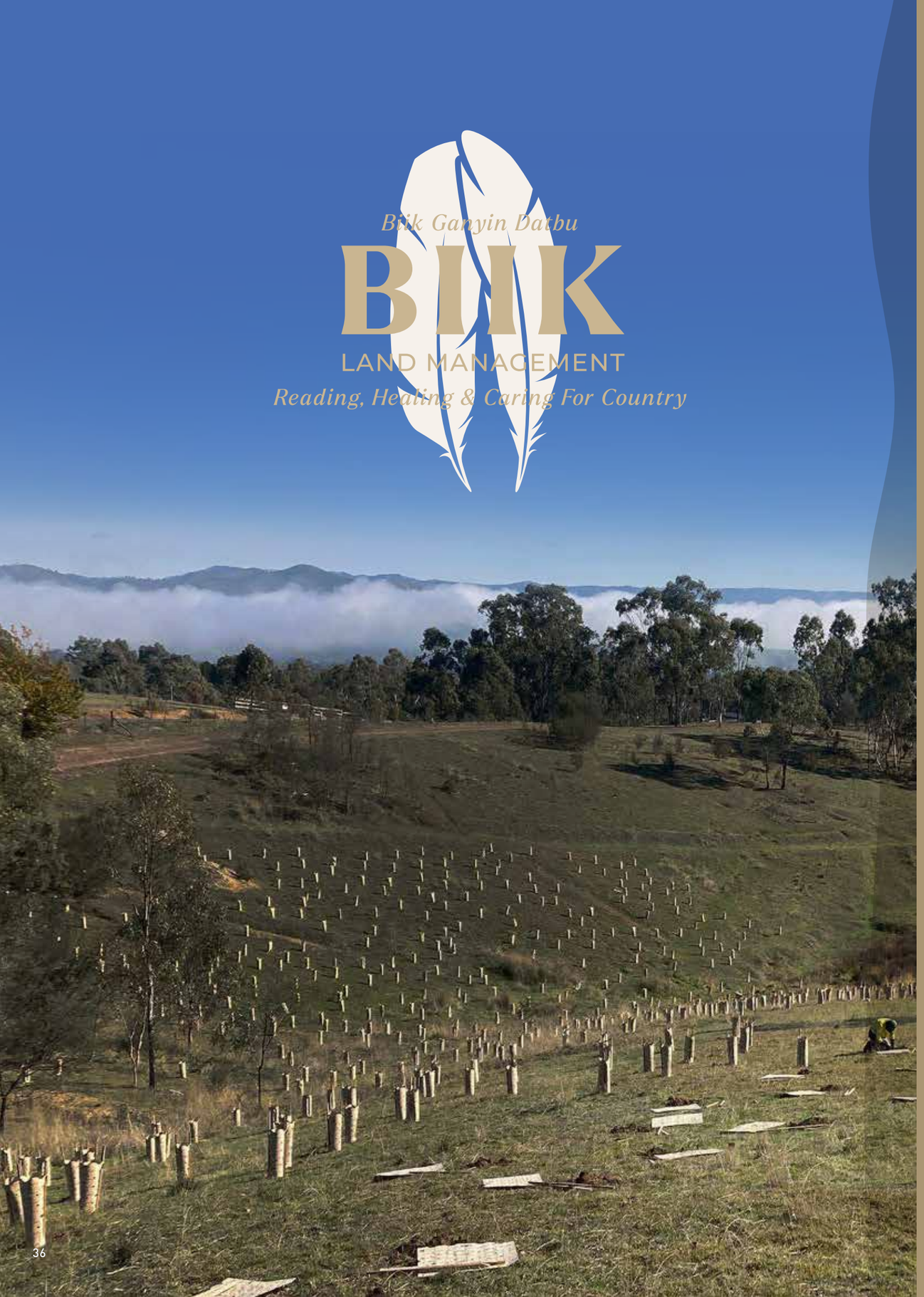
The successful development and submission of the 'Three Nations, Two Worlds: Traditional Owner-Led Forest Stewardship for Climate-Resilient Healthy Forest Country' grant application is the start of new project to extend the two |worlds methodology and practice. This three-year, funded research collaboration will see TLaWC partner with Djarra, Wadawurrung, DEECA and the University of Melbourne to develop Culturally informed methods for Victorian native forest management.

Biik Ganyin Datbu

BIIK

LAND MANAGEMENT

Reading, Healing & Caring For Country



BIIK LAND *Management*

BIIK Land Management's field-based crew completed works on approximately 80 projects across Taungurung Country in the financial year. The crew performed remote Natural Resource Management (NRM) work in all conditions to demonstrate dedication to caring for Country. Across the year, the crew travelled more than 50,000km in a diverse range of jobs including:

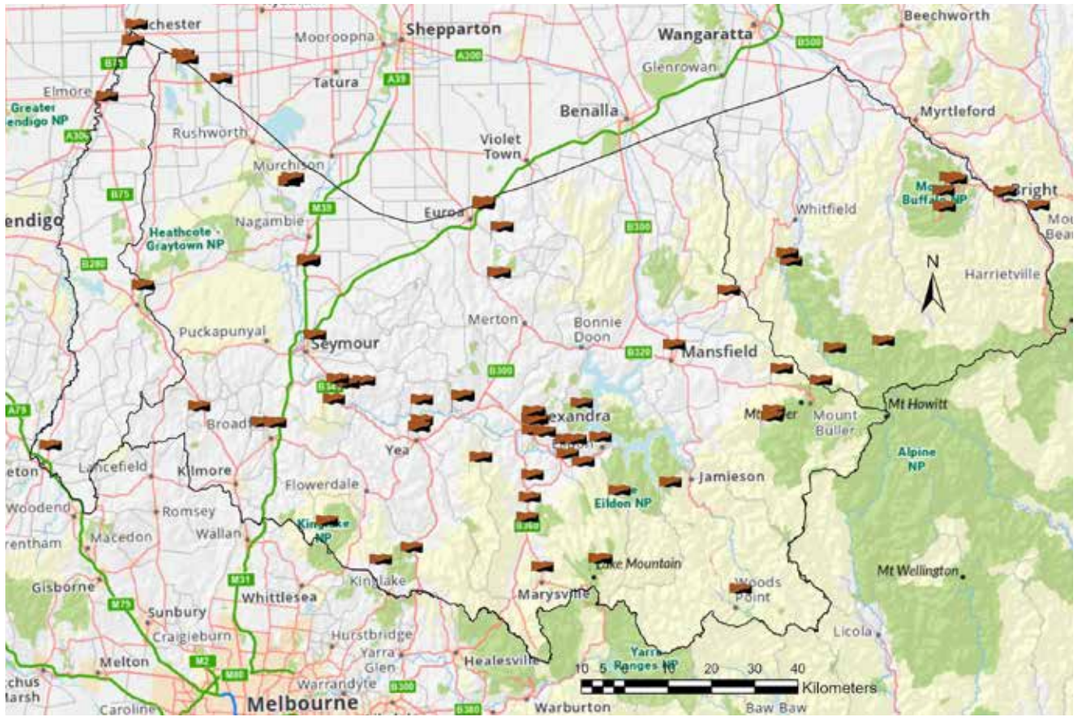
- Seed and propagule collection for sowing, growing, selling and planting 25,000 seedlings
- Site preparation for healing plantings and follow up maintenance (11, 000 plants)
- Weed surveys and control programs using diverse methods (500 hectares of sites treated)
- Habitat improvements, including nest box install and ecological survey (fish, frog, bird, Deberra and nocturnal mammals)
- Water quality monitoring
- Turtle island installation along with wetland planting and fencing
- Environmental watering of key billabongs off the Waring
- Trail clearing and maintenance for walkers and mountain bikes
- Strategic fire trail maintenance, with 23km slashed, no burn fuel treatment (21 hectares) and burn preparation works
- Wildfire town protection response as volunteers
- Illegally dumped rubbish collection from forests

Fire was a large component of the Taungurung landscape in the summer. BIIK have been in contact with the GBCMA, PV and local landcare groups regarding fire recovery. Bushfires cause a fierce physical reset of Country with the loss of many old trees across the landscape. It has been pleasing to watch the slow recovery and healing of the landscape.



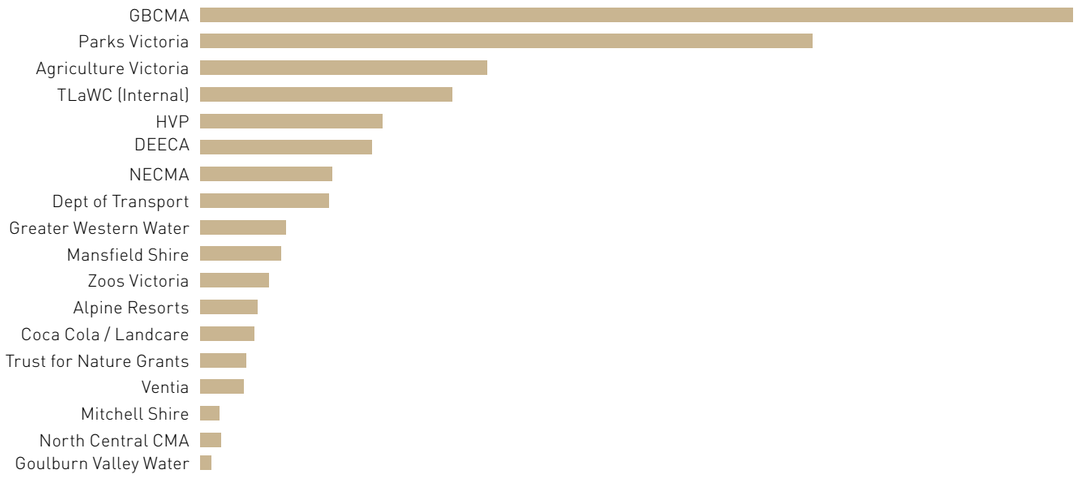






DELIVERY PARTNERS

Relative project contributions across 18 active partnerships in the BIIK Land Management program.



18 ACTIVE PARTNERS

87 PROJECTS DELIVERED

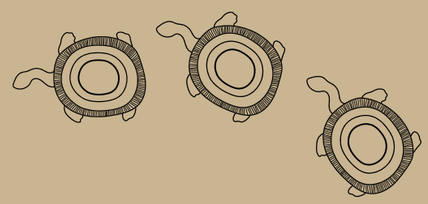
508 TOTAL DELIVERY WORK DAYS (CREW OF 2)

The BIIK crew returned to Mt Buffalo, working closely again with both PV and North East CMA with a focus on weeds in remote areas of the National Park. This season's work had three main areas of focus:

- Willows, soft rush and blackberry in remote peatlands
- Mature willows in Bunyip Creek
- Himalayan Honeysuckle in the steep gullies facing the northern flank of the mountain

Over 600 small willows were removed from a single remote peatland requiring careful subsurface work. The crew tackled steep and difficult access to work in the riverbed of Bunyip Creek, making their way up the challenging terrain to locate and treat willow while also treating a large, mature Tree of Heaven. The team returned to locations treated from the previous season and were pleased by the results of the work. The technique of clumping and tying soft rush before treatment showed outstanding results and little sign of off-target damage to other plants. Revisiting areas previously treated to see native plants beginning to regrow where the weeds had dominated is proof of positive outcomes.

The crew has worked during winter months to reduce the presence of key weed plants in Alexandra Bushland Reserve. Extensive planting on the bare hillside of the adjoining Reserve resulted in a broad scale effort at revegetating the slopes. BIIK looks forward to watching the plants grow out of the tree guards with the well-timed rain that accompanied the planting. A joint project with RMIT looking at a Taungurung Mirnong restoration project collected samples of seed from around germinating Mirnong plants from the reserve. This soil was being used to test mycorrhizal associations with Mirnong plants and how this may be used for better results in broad scale restoration.



BUSHBANK NURSERY WUNWARREN YANGGARDI

The build of TLaWC's Nursery was completed in late 2025. BIIK was able to build a 30x8 metre nursery structure at the Alexandra depot thanks to funding from the Bushbank program. While the greenhouse and growing structure was being built, nursery staff started germinating plants which were then transferred to the greenhouse on completion. Work was undertaken to refurbish shed 9 at the depot for seed extraction and storage, and general nursery duties such as sowing, setting cuttings and potting up seedlings. The growing capacity at this location is between 30-50 thousand, with 18,000 growing under 30% shade. There will also be space for under 10,000 plants to grow into larger plants outside, ready to be sent out on Country. Close collaboration with the Euroa Arboretum and Granite Hills Nursery allowed the purchase of seed, sharing seedlings and spreading growing risk on larger orders. Parks Victoria has donated significant volumes of fill to the depot from Lake Eildon to help level the site.



REGISTERED ABORIGINAL *Party*

The Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) team is responsible for performing statutory functions under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Act) and implementing the TLaWC RAP Strategy. The team continues to apply and strengthen best practice principles in cultural heritage management, alongside the commencement of strategic research projects set within the four themed areas of the RAP Strategy; Healing Stories, Healing Practices, Custodianship as Cultural Heritage Management and Vibrant Country.

Taungurung will be the leading cultural authority on our Country. The RAP strategy is designed to help the Taungurung Nation to regain control of their cultural stories of place, to reawaken Living cultural practices, to move into a position of cultural authority, and to restore Country to vibrancy through right way custodianship of place.

STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

- Approved 29 Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs)
- Approved 9 Cultural Heritage Permits (CHPs)
- 32 Notice of Intents were submitted for either new CHMPs or amendments to existing CHMPs

The number of statutory assessments has slightly decreased, which is likely a reflection of the reduction in Government funded projects and the forthcoming state election. This trend is evident across the state, with First Peoples State Relations confirming the number of new CHMPs across Victoria is at its lowest level since the commencement of the Act

The RAP team has continued to encourage and progress Early Engagement Meetings with external parties and partners seeking support and advice for their respective projects across Taungurung Country. The Early Engagement Meetings are a great way to connect with the TLaWC RAP team at the very inception of a project, prior to engaging with formal statutory assessments. This proactive engagement helps establish clarity.

TLAWC-DEECA ACHLMA

The RAP team has continued to engage with DEECA to develop an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreement (ACHLMA) to cover the Hume region of Taungurung Country.
An ACHLMA is a voluntary agreement between a RAP and a public land manager under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. Its key purpose is to establish a mutually agreed framework for protecting and managing Aboriginal cultural heritage during ongoing, routine land management activities. The agreement will lead to better collaboration between the two organisations and stronger protections for cultural heritage by creating agreed management approaches and greater visibility of DEECA's management activities. TLaWC RAP and DEECA's Hume Heritage Unit have created a clear working relationship, and both parties are excited to see the ACHLMA finalised towards this year. The RAP team also has an existing ACHLMA with GBCMA. The team has delivered cultural heritage training on Country with the Goulburn Broken CMA as part of the agreement.

COMPLIANCE

RAP Compliance supports the protection and management of Taungurung cultural heritage across Taungurung Country by monitoring compliance of statutory activities. The team continued to formalise its systems, reporting and operational procedures while responding to a range of compliance notices: 47 investigation-related matters were undertaken where there was concern or evidence of non-compliance, along with 17 compliance inspections (11 of which identified non-compliance). The team also progressed in broader capability and governance procedures, including the development of misconduct procedures for external Heritage Advisors, improvements to CHMP evaluation and stakeholder understanding, object collection management, industry engagement and liaison with local government and regulatory bodies. The progress within the last year has demonstrated a growing compliance approach that proactively supports both statutory accountability and practical cultural heritage protection.

CULTURAL HERITAGE FIELDWORK

Field Services Officers were deployed to the field on various CHMP assessments, including works associated with survey, complex assessment excavations, archaeological salvage excavations, monitoring and compliance inspections for a total of 228 days across the financial year. On average, 5.4 staff were deployed per working day across 53 CHMPs.

Complex assessment and archaeological salvage excavations made up most of the fieldwork. Sustained multi-week commitments included the Inland Rail Project from Broadford to Wandong and a large residential development at Broadford located near to Mt Piper. Fieldworks were also delivered on TLaWC's Kyneton social housing project, with the RAP team protecting cultural values on the Nation's own build. A CHMP was also supported for TLaWC's Nyagaroon project.

Table 1 – Cultural heritage fieldwork conducted in FY2025-26

Quarter	Financial Quarter 2025/26	Working days	Staff deployed	Ave. staff per day
Q1	Jul – Sep 2025	65	307	4.7
Q2	Oct – Dec 2025	63	394	6.3
Q3	Jan – Mar 2026	61	399	6.5
Q4	Apr – Jun 2026	62	266	4.3
Total	**Jul 2025 – Jun 2026**	**251**	**1,366**	**5.4**



FIELD SCHOOL

In September 2025, the RAP team returned for the second Lake Eildon field school which saw a higher attendance than the first. The field school continues to embody both Cultural Knowledge and Perspectives with Two-Way learning as its core principle ensuring the way culture is taught is not a lecture, but a yarn. While the field school is a mutually beneficial learning environment for those seeking to hone their archaeology skills and cultural understanding, it also fulfills core principles in the RAP strategy themes of Healing Stories and Healing Practices. The field school returns in November 2026 with an additional field school at Reedy Lake focusing on Culturally Modified Trees and earth features.





2025 Australian Archaeology Association Conference

In December 2025, the RAP team attended the Australia Archaeology Association (AAA) conference in Perth. The gathering is an excellent knowledge sharing opportunity in which TLaWC's RAP team were proud to present some of the current projects whilst also learning from other mobs. TLaWC's presentations included:

- 'Can Time Heal All Negative Portrayals' by Dr Michelle Richards and Jonah Honeysett
- 'Decolonisation of Education Institutions' by Daniel Young and Chris Antonopoulos

Strategic Partnerships Program (SPP) – Learning from Taungurung Country, Complex thinking for Complex problems: in partnership with La Trobe University, TLaWC was awarded a grant from the Department of Education to develop learning materials for school students. The program will deliver a series of co-designed online learning resources that will develop students' understandings and applications of Indigenous Knowledges, focused on Country and place and relational methods for complex problem solving. The online format will ensure that the program can be accessed equitably, anticipated to reach more than 500 students annually.

Healing through Community Collections and Recollections – Taungurung Country: TLaWC was awarded funding from the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council to assess artefact collections and any oral history recollections for the Mt Buffalo region of the Australian Alps. The Mount Buffalo region of the Australian Alps has deep significance in the Lore of the Taungurung Nation, connected to the ceremonial and physical representations of artefacts. The opportunity to study the privately held collections by local community members (landholders, farmers, and Indigenous community members) would be a novel pathway to deepening connections and understandings of the Australian Alps.

TAUNGURUNG BIIK DULA
Management Board

In February 2026, under the Recognition Settlement Agreement (RSA), the Victorian Government and TLaWC entered into a Traditional Owner Land Management Agreement (TOLMA) to enable Joint Management of 9 Aboriginal Title Lands on Taungurung Country. Joint Management is the State and the Taungurung Traditional Owner group sharing the management of Aboriginal Title land. This partnership arrangement includes establishing a Traditional Owner Land Management Board (TOLMB). TLaWC have named the TOLMB the Taungurung Biik Dula Management Board, which means 'We are proud of Taungurung Country'. The Taungurung Biik Dula Management Board, once established, will be supported by an Executive Officer employed by TLaWC in February 2026. This Executive Officer is currently working through the establishment processes of the TOLMB and will provide ongoing support to the appointed Board Members.



Process

In 2027, the Taungurung Biik Dula Management Board will have its 8 members: the majority of members being nominated by TLaWC after an expression of interest process, and 1 member will be nominated by the Secretary of DEECA. This includes a nomination by TLaWC for the Chair position. The Deputy Chair will be nominated by the Minister for Environment. All Members are appointed by the Minister of Environment. Once the TOLMB members are appointed, one of their first objectives will be to set strategic priorities for the management of Aboriginal Title land. This will be through the development of Joint Management Plans (JMP) prepared in partnership with the State. These plans enable the knowledge and culture of Taungurung people to be recognised in the management of the appointed lands. Once the JMP's are in place, the role of the TOLMB is to support and guide the operational delivery and then the review of these plans. Under joint management, the state will continue to be responsible for operational management. Dedicated Taungurung Park Rangers are employed to work on the jointly managed lands.







Taungurung Park Ranger Program

The Taungurung Park Rangers continue to care for beautiful Taungurung Country. The Rangers been building custodianship and connection to place within the Waring-Biik landscape, and other bio-cultural landscapes, in partnership with the BIIK, CLM and BKE teams. A core activity has been the Cat Monitoring program at Nanadhong. Four cameras were installed in four locations (the entrance to the park, Ned's Gully, Cooks Mill and Sugarloaf Saddle). The program was funded through the Good Neighbor Project and ran from 2023 to 2026. This has now ended, but the Ranger Program will continue to keep the monitoring program running as it provides invaluable data. Rangers have installed 8 cameras (two at each location). The impact of a program like this enables the team to capture images of species both invasive and non-invasive. Southern brown bandicoot – an endangered species with its young – have been spotted. This is evidence that despite the presence of cats and foxes, they are able to breed. The cameras also detected Alpine dingo, which play a key role in controlling smaller invasive species. The team has also built connections to the existing land managers in Parks Victoria across Taungurung Country to understand connection and relationship with Country. This continues as the team expands the working portfolio and range ahead of the Taungurung Biik Dula Management Board to understand the expressions of Country in these locations.

BOARD AND *Governance*

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

Daada Gurnap Nhilam provides independent oversight of TLaWC's financial management, risk frameworks and governance processes. There were three independent members and one board appointee. Throughout the year, the Committee reviewed regular 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 key infrastructure projects and discussions around difficulties faced in enforcing LUAA compliance. 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.

Director	Attended	Eligible
Kaley Nicholson	11	11
Alex Burns	9	11
Andy Gargett	8	11
Aunty Patsy Smith	5	6
Isobel Morphy-Walsh	5	6
Rebecca Monohan	5	5
Arimaya Yates	5	5
Uncle Stephen Walsh	4	5
Nelson Aldridge	4	5
Aunty Joanne Nicholson	4	5
Sarah Stevenson-Carlton	4	5
Aunty Jacqui Stewart	3	5
Marcus Stewart	1	2
Aunty Loraine Padgham	0	1



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 Interim Chief Executive Officer of the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations.



Arimaya Yates | Deputy Chair

Arimaya is a proud Nira balluk Taungurung woman who is deeply committed to the nurturing, protection and restoration of Taungurung Biik and to the wellbeing and self-determination of Taungurung peoples.



Nelson Aldridge | Director

Nelson works across local, regional, and national emergency management and recovery networks. His role focuses on strengthening community resilience and embedding Indigenous knowledge systems into disaster recovery and preparedness. He is committed to using these skills to contribute to a positive future for Taungurung people and Country.



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.



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.



Rebecca Monohan | Director

Rebecca is a respected leader and advocate in the West of Melbourne, working to strengthen self-determination and community wellbeing. Her focus remains on creating opportunities that empower Taungurung people, strengthen culture, and uphold the rights and aspirations of Taungurung people for generations to come



Aunty Joanne Nicholson | Director

Joanne is a proud Koori woman with has passion and practical experience in Caring for Country through her involvement in Cultural Heritage Management. She has recently been elected to the Taungurung Elders Council and the Taungurung Treaty Delegation Team. Joanne also brings strong governance experience through her role as a Board Member at First Nations Legal and Research.



Sarah Stevenson | Director

Sarah has a strong interest and involvement in land management, Treaty and Native Title processes. She values these as critical pathways for cultural authority, self-determination and long-term outcomes for Taungurung people. Sarah has strong community accountability, a commitment to cultural governance and Aboriginal-led decision-making & responsibility.



Uncle Stephen Walsh | Director

Stephen has held positions on the TLaWC Board for many years, including as a previous Board Chair. His experience has been well recognised for having been a strong advocate for TLaWC and the current governance of the organisation.

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).



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.



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.



Glossary

Australia Archaeology Association (AAA)

Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Indigenous and Environmental Histories and Future (CIEFH)

Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Land Management Agreement (ACHLMA)

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)

Biik Nganyin Datbu (Caring for our 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)

Community Power Agency (CPA)

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 Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEW)

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)

Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal (FRRR)

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)

People and Workplace Culture (PWC)

Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA)

Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP)

Southern Cross Gold (SXG)

Senior Leadership Team (SLT)

Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (TCAC)

Taungurung Cultural Forests Program (CFP)

Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC)

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 Traditional Owners Trust Participation Agreement (VTOTPA)

wawa biik (Hello Country)

Yananyin gadhaba (We Walk Together)

Yiyaga ba Wongarra (See and Know)

Yumaa Yuwang (Share Together)

THANKING OUR *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.

23 YEARS

Thank you to the following:

Goulburn Broken Catchment Management Authority
North East Catchment Management Authority
Parks Victoria
North Central CMA
Goulburn-Murray Water
Victorian Environmental Water Holder
Victoria State Government – Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions
Victoria State Government – Department of Transport
Victoria State Government – Energy, Environment and Climate Action
Victoria State Government – Department of Education
Visit Victoria
Murrindindi Shire Council
Strathbogie Shire Council
Tahbilk
Yarra Arboretum – Giving Back the Bush
Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations
Djaara
Victoria State Government – Premier and Cabinet
ganbina
Cassinia Environmental

Ngun Godjin

TAUNGURUNG
LAND & WATERS COUNCIL



