

2022-23 Annual Report

The background of the cover features a close-up profile of a koala's head on the left, looking towards the right. The background is a warm, orange-toned sunset over a body of water, with several out-of-focus light circles. In the foreground, there are stylized, layered hills in shades of brown and green, and a white, cloud-like shape at the bottom.

Wadawurrung

**Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation**

Paleert Tjarra Dja

Let's make Country good together 2020-2030
 – Wadawurrung Country Plan 2020-2030

Front Cover Image:
 Nikole Ramsay

Programs

Strategies



**Gobata Dja
 baap Ngubiyt**

Taking care of Country and waters

Caring for Country team
 Cultural values management
Dja and **Yaluk** – Country and water negotiations, acquisition and management
 Co-management
 Cultural burning
 Representation on planning boards, committees and advisory groups
 Cultural heritage management of physical artefacts



**Gobata
 bengadak tjarra**

**Us Supporting Us –
 Cultural Strengthening**

Culture and language strengthening program
 Keeping place – a safe place for our Cultural resources, for Wadawurrung to have on Country gatherings and practice culture
 Cultural centre – for sharing education and enterprise
 Wadawurrung Cultural education, language and resources
 Elders support services



**Wurrgurwilwa
 Wadawurrung
 Corporation**

**Strengthening Wadawurrung
 Corporation**

Employment and mentoring
 Enterprise development and support (internal enterprises and external enterprises)
 Recognition and respect for Wadawurrung People, Treaty
 Partnerships and stakeholder engagement
 Strengthen governance and systems
 Engagement with WTOAC members

Our Five Pillars

These programs are implemented through the work of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation's five pillars:



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We Acknowledge and pay our respects to our Elders past and present, our Ancestors who came before us, and our Members who are at the heart of Wadawurrung Culture.

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Message from the Co-Chairs

Nyoora Wadawurrung Family,

As Co-Chairs of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC), and on behalf of the Board, we Acknowledge and pay our respects to our Elders past and present, our Ancestors who came before us, and our Members who are at the heart of Wadawurrung Culture. **Nyatne** (thanks) to each and every one of you for your collective strength and spirit.

We Acknowledge and pay our respects to those who have passed onto the dreaming – we carry your spirits in everything we do.

This past financial year has been one of significant growth and change, and we acknowledge that it has been challenging. Our Mob's strength and resilience has shone through, and we have risen to the challenge. This can be seen in the many deadly projects and achievements in looking after our Culture, Country and our people during the year.

It is deadly to reflect on the achievements WTOAC has accomplished during the 2022-23 financial year in relation to **Paleert Tjaara Dja** – Let's make Country good together 2020-2030 – Wadawurrung Country Plan, which serves as our guiding strategic plan. There is a great deal to celebrate.

Through our four Wadawurrung Country Plan

program areas: Cultural Heritage, **Gobata Dja** – Caring for Country, Us supporting US – Cultural Strengthening, and Strengthening Wadawurrung Corporation, this report showcases the successes achieved through the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and the Corporation staff working together.

It has not been without its challenges, and we know that it is through the hard work, passion, and dedication of our Mob that has made it possible. For that, we are incredibly grateful.

We take this opportunity to thank the Board of Directors who guided us through 2022 and 2023, and special mention to the outgoing Directors Aunty Mary Shuttleworth, Macaylah Johnson, Jamie McPherson, and Sam Oldaker.

We would particularly like to say a big **Nyatne** (thanks) to Patrick Fagan for his service and leadership as previous Board Chair and acknowledge that it can be an onerous role.

Nyatne to the Council of Elders for their wisdom, and to the **Ngal Ngal La** committee, who have met regularly and supported the Board in guiding our Cultural governance. As relatively new governance committees, we intend to continue to strengthen how our collective Cultural decision-making takes place.

We are on a collective learning journey, drawing from our Cultural traditions and improving our governance, and how we work together on Cultural matters like Wadawurrung language and knowledge sharing. An additional benefit of these committees is the interfamily relationships and connections that are formed or strengthened.



Focus for 2022-23

During the 2022-23 financial year, the Board of Directors has focused on leadership and staff changes. We look to the next financial year with a new CEO who will join us by the end of the calendar year. We have also directed our focus on strengthening finances and understanding of governance and systems, so that we can continue to work towards a sustainable, self-determined future for our people in a strategic way. We are committed to continue to provide Cultural services, Community events and increase Cultural activities that we know our Wadawurrung family value.

WTOAC's work involves many different aspects. WTOAC guides the way we protect Culturally significant places, ensuring we have representation within the First Peoples' Assembly and furthering our Treaty negotiations. The Corporation ensures our people benefit from the previously scheduled Commonwealth Games and continue to advocate for Wadawurrung despite the event's unexpected cancellation. It is in all these matters that we find reparations for past wrongs with a look towards inter-generational benefit and healing, which is always at the forefront of our minds.

Leadership

Nyatne to Liam Murphy for taking on the interim CEO role at short notice and for his calm and considered leadership during his tenure. To the General Managers who have been appointed as part of our new organisational structure to form an executive leadership team, three who are Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, thank you for working collaboratively. Your support to Liam,

the Board of Directors, and your relationships with your staff in sharing your expertise, Cultural knowledge and leadership, have greatly helped us in navigating the year.

Furthermore, we acknowledge and thank all the WTOAC staff who have had to take on additional responsibilities during the transition.

We appreciate the Mediation team's tireless work in supporting and advocating for Wadawurrung to be recognised in our land rights and negotiations. We acknowledge their journey in reaching an agreement after years of negotiating, demonstrating a dedicated commitment to our recognition of Wadawurrung Country.

This invaluable work gave the momentum for us to reach a significant step in our people's journey of having our Wadawurrung Native Title formally recognised. Congratulations to all involved.

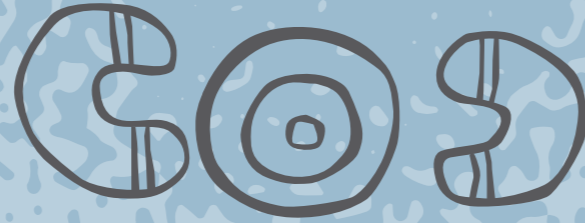
It is inspiring and fills us with pride to see our **wunggurrwil murrup** (strong spirit) as a people in times of change. We continue to walk in our Elders footsteps and the long history of adaptation and resilience we come from. We hope you enjoy the 2022-23 Annual Report, which showcases the deadly work of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation.

Gobata (take care),

Sarah Eccles and Greg Robinson

Co-Chairs, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Board of Directors



Director: Greg Robinson, Co-Chair

Family Line: Thomas Joseph
Russell Robinson



Director: Sarah Eccles, Co-Chair

Family Line: Valentine
Margaret Dalton



Lee Hartman

Family Line: Mary Edith Hine



Terence Rangī

Family Line: Hector Norman
Arthur Robinson

VACANCY

Family Line: Victoria Alice
Brannelly

VACANCY

Family Line: Mabel Violet Powell

VACANCY

Family Line: Ellen Rose King

Board Meetings

	28 07 22	26 08 22	30 09 22	21 10 22	28 10 22	25 11 22	02 12 22	13 12 22	23 12 22	02 03 23	25 03 23	05 05 23	08 06 23	
Sarah Eccles	Nominated at General Meeting													
Greg Robinson			Apology											
Terance Rangī	Nominated at General Meeting													
Carryn Cole	Nominated at General Meeting											Apology		
Sam Oldaker	Nominated at General Meeting										Resigned from Board			
Lee Hartman							Apology							
Patrick Fagan		Apology							Resigned from Board					
Jamie McPherson		Apology					Resigned from Board							
Aunty Mary Shuttleworth							Resigned from Board							
Macaylah Johnson								Resigned from Board						

■ On the Board
 ■ Annual General Meeting
 ■ General Meeting



Governance Structure

Council of Elders

The purpose of the Wadawurrung Council of Elders is to function as a sub-committee to WTOAC's Board, to provide support for Cultural decision-making relating to the Corporation, and to provide guidance on leadership and direction. The Council also provides an important and valuable role in improving the participation of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in key decisions relating to the protection, preservation, and promotion of Wadawurrung Cultural Heritage.

The Council of Elders aims to have representatives from each of the seven family lines representing the descendants of John Robertson/Robinson who was born on Terrinallum Station, 1846 and died at Warrnambool, 1919, wherever feasible.

Board of Directors

The role of the Board is to effectively represent and promote the interests of WTOAC with a view to adding long-term value to the Corporation's

Council of Elders and **Ngal Ngal La** aims to provide a Culturally safe space for Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to:

- * share Cultural knowledge
- * promote respectful and constructive discussions
- * protect and preserve Wadawurrung intellectual property
- * build capacity among Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to actively contribute in Cultural decision making
- * promote harmony and unity across Wadawurrung families
- * promote Wadawurrung Cultural education and language
- * support Wadawurrung Cultural Strengthening in line with the goals of the Wadawurrung Country Plan.

assets and reputation. In fulfilling its role, the Board directs and supervises the management of the Corporation's business and affairs.

Ngal Ngal La Cultural Governance Advisory Committee

The Wadawurrung Cultural Governance Advisory Committee (WCGAC) is a sub-committee to the Board of WTOAC, established with the purpose of assisting in Cultural decision-making concerning the Board and its functions. WCGAC also has a significant role in enhancing the involvement of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in key decisions relating to safeguarding Wadawurrung Cultural Heritage.

Like the Council of Elders, WCGAC aims to have representatives from each of the seven family lines.



Nyoora to all Members and Traditional Land Owners,

Uncle Mel Robinson, Uncle Norm Eccles, Aunty Joy Oldaker, Aunty Gwen Perkins, Aunty Marj James, Aunty Mary Shuttleworth, Aunty Shirley Richardson, Aunty Glenda Eccles and myself are all involved in the Council of Elders. As a group, we sit monthly and alternate offices in **Djilang** and **Ballaarat**. As you can imagine, over the 2022-23 financial year, we broached numerous issues, none being more devastating than the cancellation of the Commonwealth Games, which were to be held on our lands. The number of hours spent in discussion on the benefit the games would bring financially to our Mob with tourism and notoriety were wasted, and those hours irretrievable. As a group of Elders, we are committed to the protection and ongoing strength of our Culture and contributing to the overall development of the Corporation in all aspects.

If you wish to join us, please contact me.

Gobata and **Nyatne**

Uncle Alby Zantuck

Council of Elders Chair



Ngal Ngal La brings the Wadawurrung family lines together to share and protect our family's heritage and Culture.

We receive regular updates and requests from the Heritage Unit and language officers as part of requests that come through to WTOAC.

Some decisions that we have made this year are approvals for language use in naming schools, parks and the Geelong Convention Centre.

We have worked with the Heritage Unit on Cultural Values Assessments, Cultural Heritage and Ceremonial procedures, and have approved digital content such as video recordings for the Communications team.

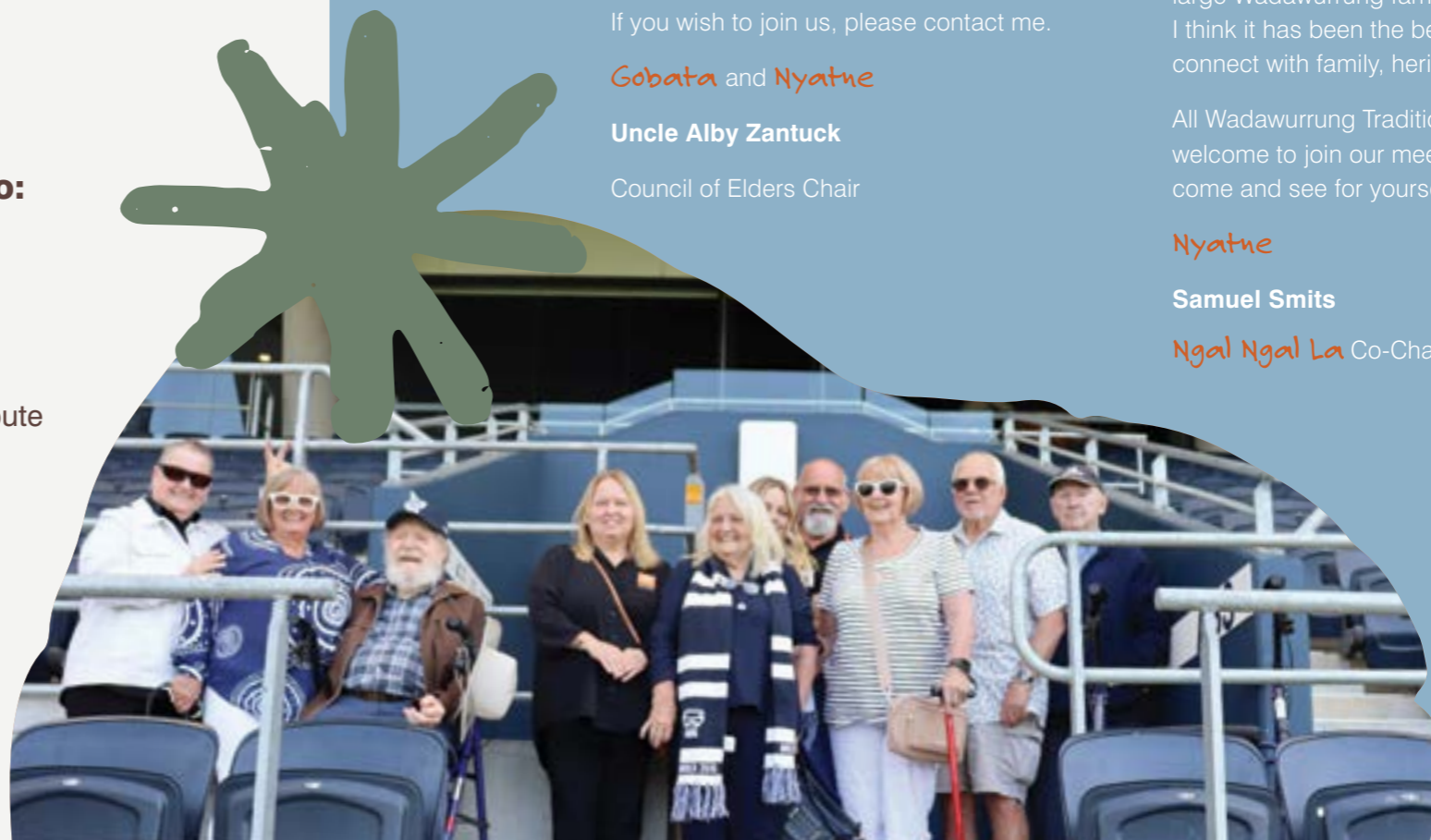
Ngal Ngal La has been an amazing place to learn from each other and bring family together. We have formed strong relationships with each other and although we are representing family lines, we all learn, share and laugh as one large Wadawurrung family. Speaking for myself, I think it has been the best thing for me to connect with family, heritage and Culture.

All Wadawurrung Traditional Owners are welcome to join our meetings as an observer - come and see for yourself.

Nyatne

Samuel Smits

Ngal Ngal La Co-Chair



Elders and family members at the Geelong Football Club.

Message from the CEO



Reflecting on the 2022-23 financial year, I take great pride in acknowledging the effort and dedication of the WTOAC staff and Members. Their achievements have been particularly impressive given significant change and disruption. The challenges we've faced have tested our resilience and adaptability, while also presenting us with valuable opportunities for growth and innovation.

Throughout the year, we have encountered changes in leadership, both at a governance and operational level, and have had to change the direction of some aspects of our business. Despite these developments, WTOAC has strengthened existing partnerships and forged new ones, and has remained dedicated to delivering services that celebrate and protect Culture.

We have appointed a new executive leadership team, who are committed to ensuring a strong and sustainable Corporation that aligns with the collective goals of our Membership.

Every year presents unique changes. Establishing a seamless flow of information within our team will prepare us to adapt our Corporation's plans as required in the year ahead.

I want to acknowledge and highlight the exceptional efforts demonstrated by our Members and staff. In addition to their regular responsibilities, our staff have made extraordinary contributions in their respective areas. The Cultural Heritage team has operated tirelessly, working seven days a week to safeguard Wadawurrung Heritage, all while meeting the demands of the Commonwealth Games' projects that were scheduled to be held on Wadawurrung Country. Our Caring for Country team completed several significant

Cultural Burns on Country, even amidst the nursery expansion. Our Cultural Strengthening team played a pivotal role in supporting the highly successful Corroboree by Full Moon event at Sovereign Hill, and our Corporate Services team has made commendable improvements by updating software, policies, finance, and implementing new systems and processes, and our Recognition and Negotiations team has supported our Members who nominated as candidates in the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

In the upcoming financial year, I look forward to seeing the continued engagement of our Members in important events and activities. I hope we can organise more events to promote stronger connection among Wadawurrung Members, encouraging your participation and efforts in achieving the aspirations of Wadawurrung people.

Liam Murphy

Interim CEO – Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation



*Corrina Eccles at Bukareeyoo.
Image by Nikole Ramsay.*

Fast Facts

94

Employees work at WTOAC (double the previous financial year)

24

Cultural activities attended by Elders

1072

Cultural Strengthening Engagements

609

Ceremonies

225

Consultations

238

Cultural Education Sessions

15,000

plants grown and sold

70+

WTOAC projects, and in 2023-24 established formal partnerships with Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Melbourne Water and Barwon Water

6

Wadawurrung Cultural Burns across public and private land

43

Permits were approved by the Cultural Heritage team

3

Cultural Values Assessments completed by the Cultural Heritage team

61

Natural Resource Management Contracts delivered



Above image: Aunty Glenda with her artwork at the Art Exhibition.



Above image: WTOAC staff at Pilk Purriyn.



Above image: WTOAC staff and Wadawurrung Elders at the Reconciliation Week event.



Event Highlights

White Night

October 8, 2022

White night was a large event held in **Djilang**. In engaging with WTOAC and Anie Skinner in particular, Wadawurrung opened the event with Welcome and Smoking and Dance Ceremony, with the support of Aunty Mary Shuttleworth. A **Wiyu** fireplace was set up and monitored by Wadawurrung males for the entire evening and provided a space for people to sit down and have a yarn and ask questions of Wadawurrung. Wadawurrung artists Kait James, Jenna Oldaker, and Billy-Jay O'toole had work projected onto buildings.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Art Exhibition

October 27 – November 30, 2022

WTOAC hosted its inaugural Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Art Exhibition at the Mercure Ballarat. The 50-piece show featured a range of works including paper art, acrylic on canvas, a croquet sculpture, a possum and emu feather rug, and macrame wall hangings. The exhibition provided a great platform for Wadawurrung artists to exhibit and promote their work and creative practices.

Pilk Purriyn

January 26, 2023

With the support of Surf Coast Shire Council, and funding from the Give Where You Live Foundation, the inaugural Pilk Purriyn truth-telling event was held at Cosy Corner in Torquay. The event began with a Welcome to Country, Smoking and dancing Ceremonies and was followed by Wadawurrung Traditional Owners talking about the impact January 26 has on First Nations People. Corrina Eccles, supported by Uncle Norm Eccles, Aunty Mary Shuttleworth, Greg Robinson, and Danae Coots, led the truth-telling. Greg emceed the event and read a poem by Uncle Mel Robinson, called This Land My Home.

Wadawurrung Reconciliation Week Event with the City of Ballarat

May 30, 2023

WTOAC joined the City of Ballarat to hold a Flag Raising Ceremony at Queen Victoria Square. Uncle Alby Zantuck conducted a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony and a cleansing of the Aboriginal flag, with the support of Aunty Glenda Eccles and Aunty Gwen Perkins. This was followed by a You Can't Ask That discussion at the Ballarat Town Hall.

Conversations that Matter – Reconciliation Week

May 31, 2023

The Give Where You Live Foundation's *Conversations that Matter* event took place at GMHBA Stadium in Kardinia Park and featured stories from Nova Peris OAM (gold medallist and athlete), Corrina Eccles, and Simon Flagg (Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative). It was attended by WTOAC staff and Elders.

Left image: Wadawurrung Elders and staff at the Conversations that Matter event.

Corporate Services



During the 2022-23 financial year, the Corporate Services pillar expanded alongside WTOAC, supporting the Corporation's growth. The team's positive approach to increased responsibilities is a source of pride for the Corporation.

Corporate Services supports WTOAC in providing services such as Human Resources, Finance, Administration, and Information Technology. Our pillar achieved many milestones including implementing new IT protocols and policies, enhancing financial accountability, and securing grants and funding opportunities. We have also welcomed new staff members, many of whom are Traditional Owners.

The expansion of our team has been an exciting development and we have welcomed a second Project Officer, an Occupational Health and Safety Human Resources specialist, and

additional administrators. The whole team enjoys the diversity that comes from their roles and the opportunities to work across WTOAC's different pillars, and that no two days are the same, which keeps our work exciting.

Thank you to all who have contributed to making the financial year a success. I look forward to what is ahead in 2023-24.

Stacey Bunn

Interim Corporate Services Manager

Key Achievements

Human Resources

Training Opportunities

- Fire Ground – assist with prescribed burning and prevention of injury
- White Card
- V/line
- Metro Safety (railway)
- Aus Chem (safe use of chemicals)
- Chainsaw
- First Aid
- Lateral violence workshop

Professional Development

WTOAC has endorsed professional development opportunities for two Traditional Owners:

Future Shapers – Community Leadership Program

Shannen Mennen, WTOAC's Corporate Services Project Officer, received a scholarship to the Committee for Ballarat's 2023 Future Shapers Program.

Leaders for Geelong Program

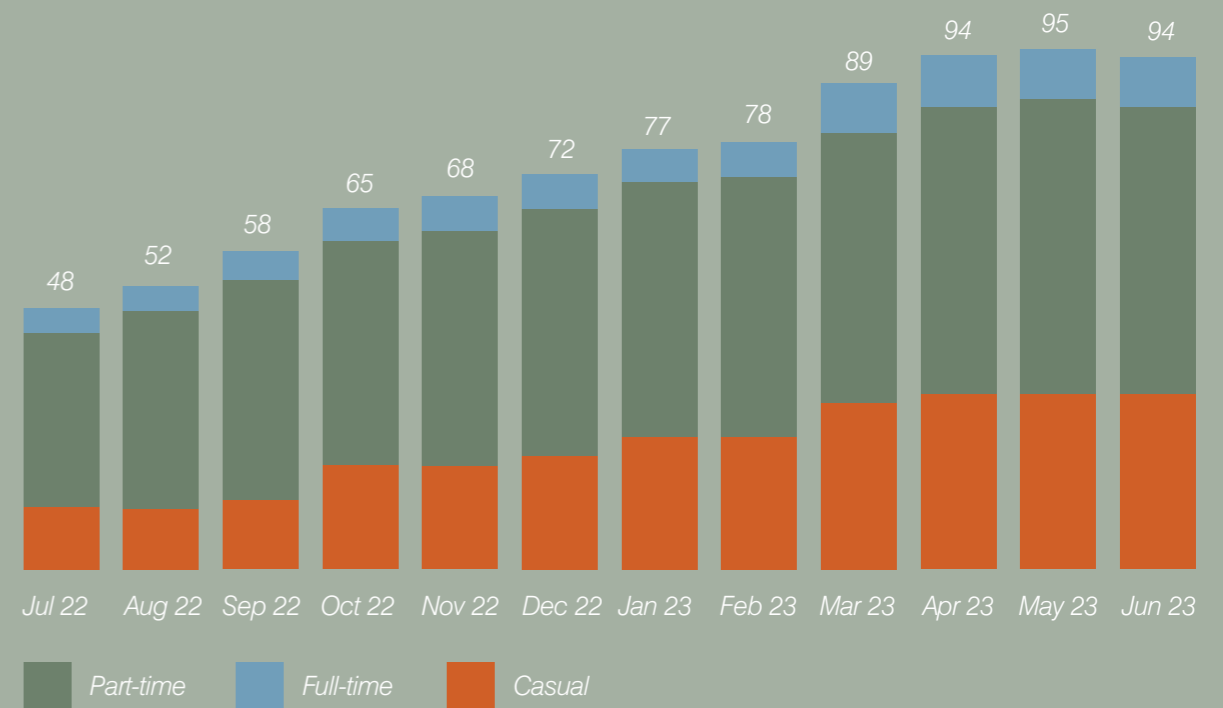
Anie Skinner graduated from the Leaders for Geelong Program in December 2022.

Employment Statistics

During the 2022-23 financial year, the Corporation has achieved remarkable growth.



Graph 1. Gender distribution (as of June 2023)



Graph 2. Employee growth chart. During the 2022-23 financial year, WTOAC has almost doubled from 48 to 94 employees.

July 2022		June 2023	
Number of employees		Number of employees	
Casual:	11	Casual:	32
Full-time:	32	Full-time:	53
Part-time:	5	Part-time:	9
Total:	48	Total:	94

First Nations employees as of June 2023	
First Nations:	34
Traditional Owners:	29
Other:	31



Koby Phillips,
WTOAC System
and Network
Administrator.



Information Technology

Significant improvements have been achieved in WTOAC's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) asset management resulting in more efficient contract management and waste reduction. The team has improved the Sharepoint document management system, provided technology and training to the Council of Elders, implemented Microsoft Intune, enforced new cyber security features, and much more.

Projects and Initiatives

Corporate Services help facilitate various projects and initiatives across WTOAC.

New Ballaarat office

On December 14, WTOAC opened its new **Ballaarat** Office on Creswick Road, marking a significant milestone in the Corporation's growth. WTOAC's Mair Street office will still be home to the Cultural Heritage team.

Partnerships

During 2022-23, WTOAC entered into the following partnership agreements:

Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA)

Melbourne Water

Barwon Water (an ongoing agreement)

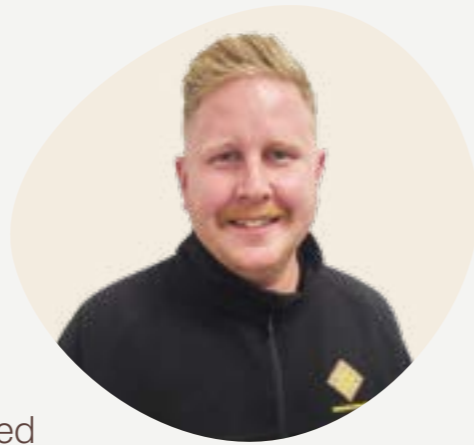
In the 2022-23 financial year, WTOAC pursued the following projects and collaborated with various providers and clients in line with the objectives in **Paleert Tjarra Dja**:

Project Name	Start Date	End Date	Status
NRM – DELWP – Peri-urban project	2022-06-24	2023-06-30	Completed
DJPR – Porrongitj Karrong	2022-06-30	2023-11-30	In progress
Melbourne Water – Liveable Communities Liveable Waterways	2022-06-30	2023-07-31	Completed
DEECA – Cultural Fire 22-25	2022-07-01	2025-06-30	In progress
DEECA – Cultural Landscapes 22 – 25	2022-07-01	2025-06-30	In progress
DELWP – SFB Capacity & Capability Building	2022-07-01	2023-06-30	Completed
NRM – DELWP-On Country Planting	2022-07-01	2022-11-30	Completed
DPC – RAP Ops 22-24	2022-07-01	2024-12-31	In progress
Give Where You Live	2022-07-01	2025-06-30	In progress
PV – Consultation Ironbark	2022-07-06	2023-03-31	Completed
DEECA – Durdidwarrah Wetland Biodiversity Study	2022-07-30	2024-07-31	In progress

NRM – PV – Western Basalt District	2022-08-30	2023-06-30	Completed
MIFA – White Night Geelong 2022 (2)	2022-09-03	2022-10-08	Completed
DEECA – Bostock Nursery	2022-09-10	2024-08-30	In progress
MIFA – White Night Geelong 2022 (1)	2022-10-08	2022-10-08	Completed
DJPR – Wangim Walk	2022-10-28	2024-03-30	In progress
DEECA – Cultural Fire Grant	2022-10-30	2024-05-01	In progress
DEECA – Anglesea River Options	2022-10-31	2023-04-30	In progress
DEECA – Murrk Ngubitj Yarram Regeneration Project	2022-10-31	2025-06-02	In progress
DJPR – Commonwealth Games Officers	2022-11-14	2026-06-15	On hold
CCMA – Service Agreement Dec 2022 to June 2027	2022-12-01	2027-11-30	In progress
City of Ballarat – Corroboree by Full Moon 2023	2023-01-31	2023-05-06	Completed
GHCMA – OCOC Wetland Connections	2023-02-01	2024-06-30	In progress
Moolap PS – Language Prog. 2023	2023-02-09	2023-12-14	In progress
COGG – Repatriated Heritage Analysis and Return to Country	2023-03-02	2024-06-30	In progress
DEECA – Moolap Wetlands CVA	2023-04-17	2023-05-26	Pending
PV – Phosphite Spraying Anglesea	2023-05-01	2023-06-30	Completed
CCMA – Saltmarsh weed control	2023-05-02	2023-06-30	Completed
FVTOC – Nation-building Resource Pool	2023-05-29	0000-00-00	In progress
DEECA – Durdidwarrah Wetland Project	2023-05-31	2024-06-30	In progress
DEECA – More Trees for a Cooler, Greener West Program – Phase 3	2023-05-31	2023-11-30	In progress
DEECA – Taking Care of Sea Country 23-24	2023-06-01	2024-06-30	In progress
City of Ballarat Biodiversity Strategy	2023-06-08	2023-11-30	In progress
DJSIR – Yuma Yirramboi Economic Development Manager	2023-06-09	2025-08-01	In progress
DEECA – Central and Gippsland Region Sustainable Water Strategy partnership 23-24	2023-06-10	2024-12-30	In progress
DJSIR – Yuma Yirramboi Economic Development Innovation	2023-06-14	2024-07-31	In progress
MW – Due Diligence for Property/Business Acquisition/Transfer Process	2023-06-14	2023-12-31	In progress
Koorie Curriculum Clusters Partnership	2023-06-16	2025-06-25	In progress
First Languages Australia – Priority Languages Support	2023-06-16	2024-06-30	In progress
MW – Lower Werribee Cultural Values Assessment	2023-06-19	2023-12-31	In progress
DEECA – WTOAC Climate Action Strategy	2023-06-21	2025-02-21	In progress
MW – Capacity for water policy and strategy participation	2023-06-21	2023-12-31	In progress
DEECA – Victorian Waterway Management Strategy (VWMS)	2023-06-26	2025-06-30	In progress
DPC -Traditional Owner Engagement Officer	2023-06-28	2024-02-29	In progress
DEECA – Moorabool at Batesford Rehabilitation	2023-06-30	2025-06-30	In progress
FVTOC – Native Foods and Botanicals Strategy	2023-06-30	2024-06-30	In progress
Yarrowee River Historical Project	2023-06-30	2023-07-31	Completed

Gobata Dja

(Caring for Country)



In the 2022-2023 financial year, Wadawurrung's **Gobata Dja** (Caring for Country) team experienced substantial growth and development.

The team's eight dedicated Project Officers focused on healing and protecting Country, covering water, marine and coastal **Dja**, **Wiyn Murrup** (Fire Spirit) Cultural Fire, and biodiversity. Their work ensures Wadawurrung's representation in the planning, policy, strategy, and delivery of projects.

Under the leadership of Chris Fagan, with support from Greg Belden, the Natural Resource Management (NRM) team has grown to meet the demands and needs of Country through revegetation, pest plant management, weed spraying, and conservation – all work that is aligned with the objectives of the Wadawurrung Country Plan and guided by the voices of our Mob.

The team participated in valuable development and training workshops, better positioning them to deliver Cultural objectives. These training initiatives covered a wide range of skills and activities, including prescribed burn training and general firefighting, shark and ray tagging in

Port Phillip Bay and other fieldwork tasks such as Phytophthora (Cinnamon fungus) spraying, chainsaw training, chemical application, plant identification, and nursery management.

I would like to extend a huge **Nyatne** to Chris Fagan (former NRM Manager), Michael Cook (former Water Officer), and Sarah Eccles (former Coastal Project Officer), and all the outgoing staff for their contributions to our collective journey.

Greg Robinson

Gobata Dja General Manager



Front Cover of the WTOAC and Melbourne Water partnership, featuring deadly artwork by Chloe Chatterton.

Key Achievements

Partnerships

Aligned with the Wadawurrung Country Plan objectives, WTOAC has established formal partnerships with Corangamite Catchment Management Authority, Melbourne Water and Barwon Water. These partnerships are consistent with WTOAC principals for collaboration, and focus on key program areas, including Caring for Country, Cultural Heritage, Policy Development and Cultural Services. Annual workplans were developed to provide a guide for these partnerships.

Corangamite Catchment Management Authority Partnership

On Thursday January 19, at Fyansford (on the lower Moorabool River), WTOAC staff met with Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) to sign a partnership agreement. CCMA has been integral to the implementation of Wadawurrung's Country Plan. This has involved working together to bring **Wiyn Murrup** back to Country on public and private lands; and protecting our precious waterways, the lifeblood of Country, with the co-design of seasonal watering proposals and setting Cultural water priorities.

Barwon Water Partnership

WTOAC'S partnership with Barwon Water has been extended for three more years (2022-2024). This renewed agreement has empowered WTOAC to apply its Caring for Country and Culture in projects like **Porronggitj Karrong**. The approach prioritises listening to Country and letting it tell us how it should be managed, without deadlines and deliverables.

Melbourne Water Partnership

On Friday June 2, WTOAC and Melbourne Water (MW) met at the Western Treatment Plant in Werribee to sign a partnership agreement that will strengthen WTOAC's coordination and support for various Cultural and Caring for Country activities.



Left image:
Gobata Dja team.

Projects and Initiatives

Natural Resource Management (NRM)

The NRM team has experienced significant development and capacity expansion to meet the increased work demands resulting from strengthened relationships with key stakeholders. In 2023, WTOAC saw a major uptick in revenue, and this growth trend continues into the new financial year. **Nyatne** to Chris Fagan for all of his work as NRM Manager.

Nursery upgrade

In 2022-23, WTOAC began its Bostock nursery expansion project, funded by Bushbank, a state initiative to reduce carbon emissions. The expansion increases production from 10,000 to more than 100,000 annually, predominantly using Wadawurrung provenance seeds. A WTOAC nursery caretaker manages this growth, contributing horticultural expertise and supporting the team's plant knowledge.

Phytophthora Phosphite spraying in the Otways

The NRM team worked with the Wild Otways Initiative to study spraying phosphite to address Phytophthora, which is a massive threat to old forests and is spread by people's shoe soles and bike tyres.

Surf Coast Shire Council Contract Wadawurrung to Care for Country

On Wednesday June 7, the Gobata Dja team had their first contract with the Surf Coast Shire. The contract focuses on restoring **Djarrak** (Bells Beach) midden site on Wadawurrung Country and aligns with Wadawurrung's Country Plan, and its vision **Wurrngurwilwa gupma bengadak Wadawurrung** (all people working together to make Wadawurrung Country and Culture strong).

Matthew Chatterton,
Aunty Glenda Eccles,
Winnie Greenhalgh and
Tammy Gilson.

Below image:
Nursery at
Wadawurrung
Property in Ballan.



WTOAC staff,
Elders and
Community at
a burn.



Uncle Norm Eccles,
Liam Murphy, Cr. Liz Pattison and
Corrina Eccles at **Djarrak**.



Wiyn Murrup

Cultural Burning known as **Wiyn Murrup** is a technique Wadawurrung Old People have been using throughout generations. It promotes regeneration, herding native animals for farming, seed collection, and using the right fire and cool burning as a preventative measure to reduce the over-growth of vegetation. The concept of "the right fire" is defined by heat intensity, flame height, volume, and movement.

A **Wiyn Murrup** burn is different to a fuel reduction burn in that WTOAC controls all aspects of the fire, burning low, cool and slow, allowing the fauna inhabiting the area time to move. Once the flames have subsided, the ground is cool and safe for the fauna's return.

Wiyn Murrup Rangers Tammy Gilson and Blair Gilson had a productive year, developing the burning program and healing grasslands on the Victorian Volcanic Plain. They conducted six burns on public and private land including:

- Melbourne Water: T-section
- Melbourne Water: Lake Borrie
- CCMA: Hovells creek at the You Yangs
- CCMA: Morenghurk property on the Moorabool Yaluk
- Golden Plains Shire: Dog Rocks
- Golden Plains Shire: Bakers Lane

WTOAC thanks Wadawurrung Elder Aunty Glenda Eccles who collaborated on several burns and provided valuable input into the management and healing of Country.

The team also became accredited Prescribed Burn Officers, which allows self-determination in regard to burns. They also participated in the Savana Fire Forum at the Charles Darwin University in Darwin, where Mobs from across Australia shared their knowledge on fire techniques, biocultural mapping, and Country management.

Tammy and Blair are now developing WTOAC's **Wiyn Murrup** Fire Strategy and a data management and biocultural mapping software, which will be integral to **Wiyn Murrup** ranger team's development.



Chris Fagan and
Uncle Norm Eccles
at **Djarrak**.

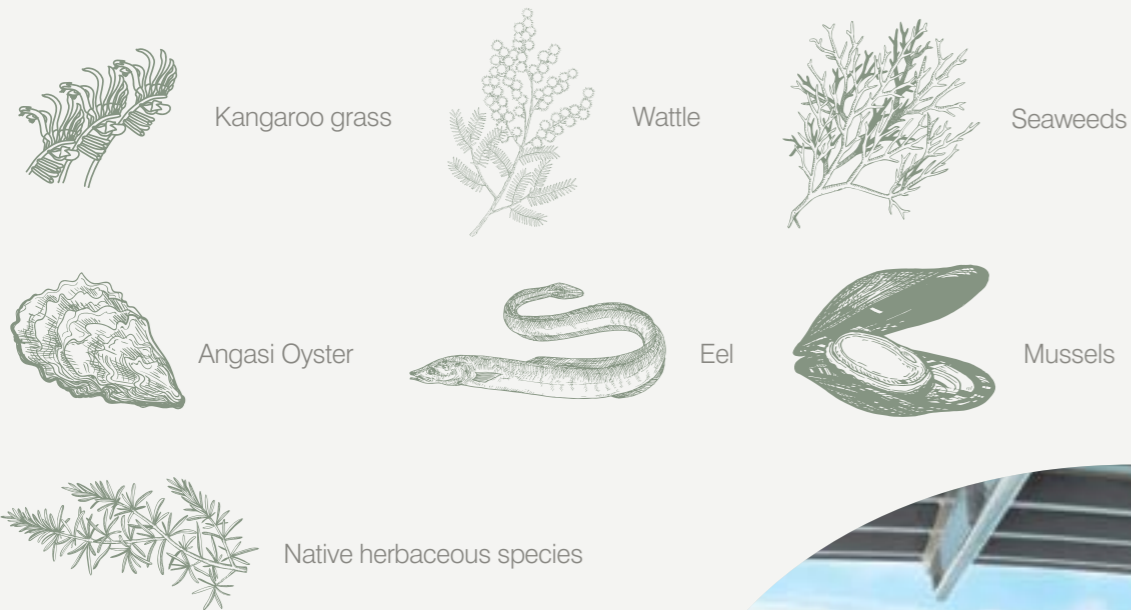
Projects and Initiatives (Cont.)

Biodiversity

Chase Aghan (WTOAC Spirit Officer) and Kelly Blake (*Gherrang*/Biodiversity Officer), have continued their work in safeguarding the biodiversity of Wadawurrung Country. Their focus is on bringing spirit back to Country by partnering with Odonata Foundation to investigate Mooramong Estate as a wildlife sanctuary. They also developed a Seasonal Calendar on the grasslands.

Native Foods Strategy

The Native Foods Strategy is underway and will identify market opportunities for WTOAC's native species. The strategy leverages the nursery and explores opportunities with aquaculture in Port Phillip Bay. Numerous species have been identified, including, but not limited to:



WTOAC, in partnership with Deakin University and The Nature Conservancy, is exploring Aquaculture opportunities in Port Phillip Bay. An inspection of a potential three-hectare site has taken place, with potential for restorative and commercial Aquaculture, with opportunities for native oysters, mussels and seaweeds. A project scope by The Nature Conservancy and considerations for this program are being incorporated in native foods feasibility work.



Mooramong Estate

Wungurrwil weagoon gerrupa-tjaava Dja (Strengthening Animal Connection to Country) is a collaborative effort involving the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and Traditional Owner groups, and aims to restore animal connections and spirit back to the landscape. Mooramong (near Carranballac and Skipton) has been selected to reintroduce the Eastern Barred Bandicoots and Eastern Quoll populations within a predator-proof fence zone.

Wungurrwil weagoon gerrupa-tjaava Dja project is designed to reinvigorate the declining grasslands of the Victorian Volcanic Plains and reintroduce small mammal populations that once thrived in the landscape.

The project has initiated camera monitoring for animal species and the first phase of the feasibility study in collaboration with Odonata Foundation. Workshops with Traditional Owner groups and government and non-government organisations have been implemented across Victoria to influence the protection and conservation of important animal species.

Project partners:

- Odonata Foundation
- National Trust of Australia (Victoria)
- Zoos Victoria

Water Returns

Nyatne to Michael Cook (former Water Officer) and Claire Mennen (Water Officer), for their work in continuing negotiations for water justice and representing the importance and connection of water to Country and Wadawurrung people.

The water team has continued negotiations with the Victorian Government through the work developed by the Sustainable Water Strategy Traditional Owner Partnership group. WTOAC worked with Alluvium and Natural Capital Economics to apply the Cultural Benefits Framework, which was applied in the Central

and Gippsland Region SWS (Action 4.3 and 4.4): Provide Wadawurrung with a share of the 3.7 GL of water to be recovered in the *Moorabool Yaluk* (Moorabool River) by upgrading infrastructure to reduce reliance on the *Moorabool Yaluk* for water for Geelong.

This water includes 700ml held in Bostock Reservoir, and 3GL in Lal Lal Reservoir. The water is to be shared between WTOAC and the Victorian Environmental Water Holder. The implementation of these actions is being led by Barwon Water (Action 4-3) and DEECA (Action 4-3 and 4-4), while WTOAC is a delivery partner. The actions are to be implemented by 2025, and are subject to a business case or additional investigation that will feed into the future investment decision making.

The pilot project was successful in its application and results, highlighting the direct benefits of the water return to the landscape and the peripheral benefits to the Mob and health, and is being used to strengthen WTOAC's case to all associated agencies.

Warri (Sea) and Coastal

Nyatne to Sarah Eccles and Matthew Chatterton for their work in managing the agencies tasked with protecting WTOAC's coastline and having its Cultural values heard by all levels of policy and planning, from the inception to the delivery of work on Country.

WTOAC is focused on investigating the current state of its coastal living sites with Members and staff undertaking drone training with Deakin University's Coastal Monitoring Program. The Point Addis Midden site was drone mapped, and work was undertaken with Parks Victoria and the *Gobata Dja* team to install interventions to diverting water away from the midden that was causing major erosion.

Work has continued with the Borough of Queenscliffe in the co-design of its Coastal and Marine Management Plan, where WTOAC has established actions to ensure the Cultural significance of the coastline is recognised in policy and WTOAC is engaged in its protection.

Ngarrwa Cultural Strengthening Team

The **Ngarrwa** Cultural Strengthening team has had a big year with a high demand for our services. Our responsibility includes handling bookings on Country, performing Welcomes and Smoking Ceremonies, education sessions, early years language sessions, consultations, representation on advisory bodies, presentations, interpretive signage, and design and urban design engagement.

I want to say **Nyatne** to our **Ngal Ngal La** Governance committee who approves language, and to the Elders support workers and Council of Elders who have been involved in many of the projects.

Nyatne to all who have been available to conduct ceremonies this year especially across the **Ballaarat** area. We look forward to many more Wadawurrung Members coming on board to assist with Welcome and Smoking ceremonies.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Auntie Mary Shuttleworth, Ash Skinner, and Danae Coots share their knowledge, and, including myself, represent three of the seven Wadawurrung family lines. They work tirelessly alongside the Cultural and Education Services Manager, Arts and Tourism Project Officer and Geelong City Deal Senior Project Advisor, with all staff well supported by an admin team based at the **Djilang** and **Ballaarat** offices.

We saw a growing interest for Wadawurrung art, and staff worked diligently to develop Culturally appropriate processes that provide opportunities for Wadawurrung artists to contribute their work to projects.

We farewelled Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Anie Skinner (former Language Officer) and we thank her for the valued contributions in

knowledge-sharing and protecting language.

Our team works closely with all WTOAC pillars as many projects and engagements overlap and many of the projects require an increasing level of engagement with Elders and Members.

I want to extend my heartfelt **Nyatne** to each individual in our pillar for their dedication to Cultural strengthening. Thank you for your exceptional efforts and commitment.

Corrina Eccles

Ngarrwa Cultural Strengthening Team General Manager

Corrina Eccles takes home Committee for Geelong Frank Costa AO Leadership Award

On Wednesday March 8, 2023, International Women's Day, Corrina Eccles was awarded the Committee for Geelong Frank Costa AO Leadership Award. This is one of **Djilang's** most esteemed awards with Corrina receiving a standing ovation on announcement.

Image: Ash Skinner dancing at **Pilk Purriyn**.



Image: Kyle O'Toole, Corrina Eccles and BJ O'Toole.

Key Achievements

Language App

The new Wadawurrung language and story app will soon be available to all Members (it is currently available for Apple phones).

Bukareeyoo

In November 2022, WTOAC collaborated with the Barwon Coast Committee to rename Ocean Grove Spit to **Bukareeyoo** (between). The initiative aligns with the Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement Strategy within the Wadawurrung Country Plan.

Songtimes on Wadawurrung Country

Songtimes on Wadawurrung Country, a series of recordings and stories, was created in partnership with the Borough of Queenscliff and Queenscliff Primary School's music teacher, and was launched in Point Lonsdale in October, 2022. The students produced the recordings with support from WTOAC staff Anie Skinner and Corrina Eccles who helped with language pronunciation, recording, and the use of traditional instruments like clap sticks and possum drumming.

Kindergarten Wadawurrung Language Classes

Ngarrwa Officer Danae Coots has been teaching cultural education at Bethany Kindergartens. Danae has pursued her passion for Wadawurrung language, shadowing Corrina on Moolap Primary School language lessons.

Spirit of Tasmania

After operating from Station Pier in Bunawrung Country (Port Melbourne), for 37 years, the Spirit of Tasmania relocated its Victorian port to Corio Quay, **Djilang**. The first sail and opening of the new port took place on Sunday October 23, 2022. Wadawurrung Traditional Owners greeted the first arrivals with a traditional Welcome to Country and dance.

Wadawurrung stories were included in the terminal through collaboration between Geelong Port, Spirit of Tasmania, Glenn Romanis, Mark Trinham and John Challis, and many WTOAC staff and Traditional Owners, who participated and shared their knowledge.



Key Achievements (Cont.)

Journey on Wadawurrung Country

The Journey on Wadawurrung Country project continues with eight more Elders contributing their photographs and stories. The project entwines Wadawurrung voices, sharing their journeys, identities, and stories, and allowing the community to see and hear Wadawurrung faces and stories.

Wadawurrung Artwork at Denny's Place

Wadawurrung artist Chloe Chatterton's piece, Waterways, is featured on the new laneway in Geelong's CBD. The piece represents water, the lifeblood of Wadawurrung Country and reminds people that Central Djilang was once a place of freshwater and mineral springs.

This project is being delivered as part of the 10-year, \$500 million Geelong City Deal, of which WTOAC is a partner.

Nyaal Banyul

As part of the Geelong City Deal partnership, WTOAC has worked with many government agencies on the future of Geelong Convention and Event Centre. The competitive tender process was informed by Wadawurrung Design Principles, and narratives. A Wadawurrung name **Nyaal Banyul** was chosen by Traditional Owners and endorsed by **Ngal Ngal La**.

Corroboree at Sovereign Hill

On Saturday, May 6, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative met at Sovereign Hill and performed a Corroboree under the full moon. With more than 600 tickets sold, this cultural strengthening opportunity allowed Wadawurrung to connect with the **Ballaarat** community through Culture. The performance featured a Welcome conducted by Aunty Marlene Gilson, narration from Barry Gilson, and dance that was taught by Tammy Gilson and Ash Skinner, and coordination of the event by Nichole Madin with support from other WTOAC staff.

This event was able to take place thanks to the support of City of Ballarat and Sovereign Hill.

Above image: Sophie Comerford, Rebekah Devlin and Jake Comerford at Corroboree. Image by Chris Puro.



Above image: Sarah Price, Matthew Chatterton, Aunty Mary Shuttleworth, Trisha Donovan and Ash Skinner with Chloe Chatterton's artwork at Denny's Place.



*Left image: WTOAC staff at the announcement of the preferred tenderer and beautiful name **Nyaal Banyul** for the Geelong Convention Centre.*

Below image: Ash Skinner presenting a Message Stick to Cr Des Hudson, City of Ballarat Mayor. Image by Chris Puro.



Events

The Cultural Strengthening team has continued engagement with major events and projects including:

- Goldfields Track
- Portarlington Pier
- Armstrong Creek Library
- Chisholm Road Prison
- Harpley Walk Trail
- Melbourne Water Elders Possum Skin Project
- **Pilk Purriyn**
- **Borongook** Drysdale Library
- White Night
- Spirit of Tasmania
- Kardinia Park upgrade
- Kardinia Park Sports Museum
- Queenscliff Museum
- the Wool Museum
- Geelong Arts Centre
- Barwon Heads Bypass
- Wangim Walk
- Yirrap-a Coastal walk
- Surf Coast Highway upgrade
- Winchelsea Tree Trails Project
- Djilang Alliance
- Green Spine
- Little Malop Street Extension
- Market Square Masterplan
- **Wurriki Nyal**
- New school precincts
- Surf Coast Aquatic Centre
- Northern Growth Precinct

The team was also heavily involved in the Give Where You Live Foundation's Conversations That Matter event that was attended by more than 500 people in Djilang, and many projects across our **Wavri** (Sea) Country in collaboration with with the **Gobata Dja** team.

Rip Curl Pro

There was a strong Wadawurrung presence at the Rip Curl Pro, including a Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremony. The event featured prominent Wadawurrung signage, and approved video footage was streamed worldwide, featuring Wadawurrung education and the promotion of Caring for **Wavri** (sea) Country work.

Bookings for 2022-23 financial year

We have had a total of 1072 Engagements.



Cultural Heritage Unit



The 2022-23 financial year has been a busy one for the Heritage Unit and the pace of development in **Ballaarat**, **Djilang** and the Werribee growth corridor, has resulted in an increased demand to participate in and assess Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) and Cultural Heritage Permits (CHPs).

Although the Commonwealth Games will not be going ahead, the team has worked tirelessly, seven days a week, for eight months to seek approvals for Commonwealth Games-related infrastructure on Wadawurrung Country. While this extra workload helped the Heritage Unit's, and the Corporation's bottom line, it was taxing for our staff. I thank all the Heritage Unit for diligently investigating and protecting Wadawurrung Cultural Heritage under these difficult circumstances.

The Heritage Unit's Cultural Values Assessments (CVA) team continues to strengthen, and WTOAC are one of the only Traditional Owner Groups who now has the capacity to produce its own CVAs from beginning to end. Recently, Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Michael Cook commenced heading up the CVA Team in the newly created role of Cultural Values Assessment Team Leader. We also welcomed Wadawurrung Traditional Owner Macaylah Johnson to the CVA Team ensuring that CVAs will continue to be directed and led by Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.

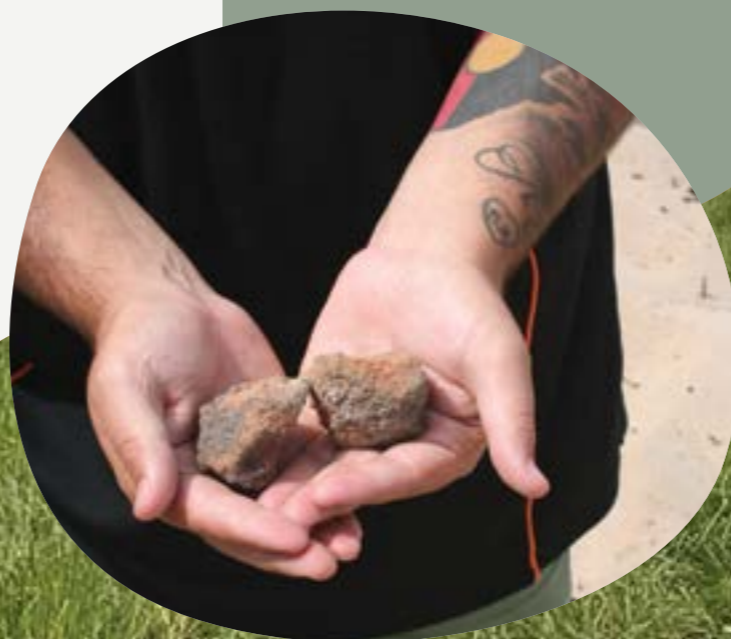
Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Kaelan Morrison and Kyle O'Toole also took up new roles as Compliance Inspectors within the Compliance Unit led by Jesse Lovett. It is wonderful to have two Wadawurrung Traditional Owners on the frontline of protecting Cultural Heritage. Uncle Bert Fagan and Billy-Jay O'Toole continue to work tirelessly to protect Wadawurrung Cultural Heritage in their respective roles as Senior Cultural Heritage

Officer (Elder) and Senior Cultural Heritage Officer. We appreciate the heavy burden that they, and all Traditional Owners carry daily as they make decisions regarding Wadawurrung's shared Cultural Heritage.

In 2023, Siobhan Privitera rejoined in her new RAP Manager role after maternity leave, and Steph Frydas also returned from maternity leave as Senior Heritage Adviser. We have employed and trained more than a dozen new fieldworkers who have been doing an excellent job learning all about Wadawurrung Country and helping the Heritage Unit to identify and protect Cultural heritage.

Jesse Martin

*Cultural Heritage Unit
General Manager*



Key Achievements

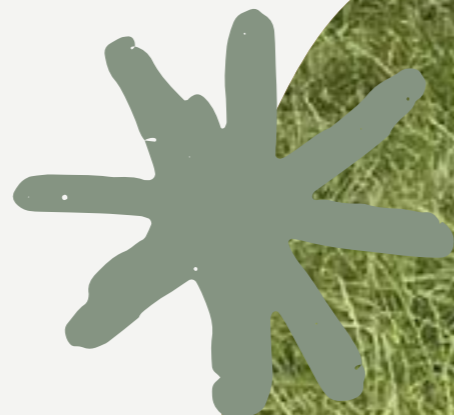
Staff Training and Development

Kacie Mitchell, Winnie Greenhalgh and Kaelan Morrison have completed their Certificate III in the Landcare and Ecosystems Management course. The staff completed this program through Trust for Nature.

Jon Naylor and Aidan Kickett enjoyed their second week away in Portland with the Certificate Four IV in Cultural Heritage learning.

Remote first aid training at Bostock

Fourteen members of the Heritage and Field teams completed their Remote First Aid Training at Bostock in January 2023.



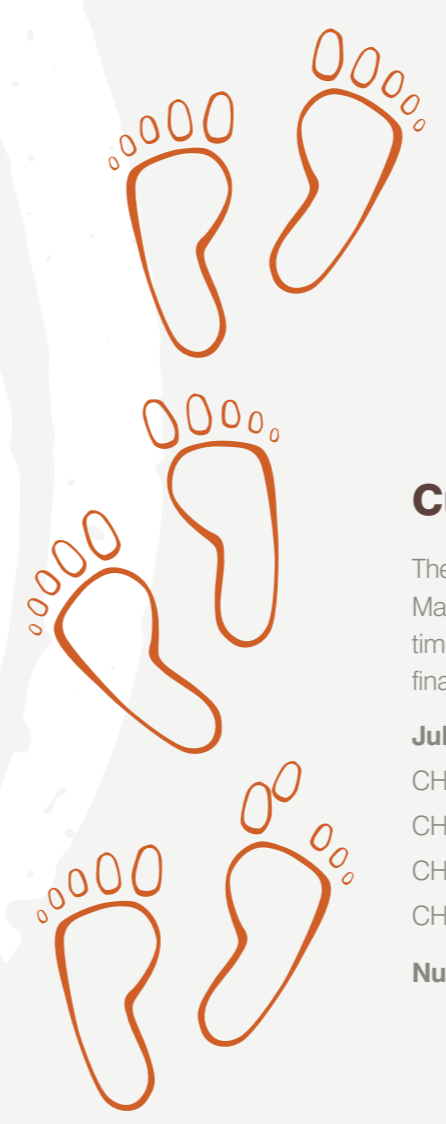
Cultural Values Assessments

The purpose of a Cultural Values Assessment (CVA) is to document and record both tangible and intangible Wadawurrung Cultural values within a specific area of Wadawurrung Country or designated study area. The CVA's primary focus is on physical and environmental features, as well as historical and contemporary narratives and themes. These elements collectively tell a story about the land and environment from the perspective of Wadawurrung people.

A CVA can:

- Produce and record cultural values that can add meaning to Cultural landscapes and social spaces for Wadawurrung people.
- Increase Cultural awareness, knowledge, and capacity of practitioners and land and waterway managers in the region and support them to appropriately and respectfully manage places of significance.
- Sensitively communicate and promote Wadawurrung Cultural values.
- Identify specific information and stories that can be shared and celebrated.
- Explore through self-determination, opportunities for Wadawurrung people to participate in land and waterway management, monitoring, and evaluation.
- Inform possible future site-specific studies (such as Cultural Heritage Management Plans etc.) and direction.

The following images are of sites where Cultural Values Assessments took place.



Cultural Heritage Management Plan Metrics

The Cultural Heritage Unit is responsible for evaluating Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) and CHMP amendments in accordance with statutory timelines. Listed below are the number of CHMPs and their status for the 2022-23 financial year:

July – December 2022

- CHMP 51 Approved
- CHMP 9 Withdrawn
- CHMP 1 Stop the Clock
- CHMP 1 Refused

January – June 2023

- CHMP 19 Approved
- CHMP 53 Withdrawn
- CHMP 2 Current
- CHMP 5 Stop the Clock

Number of approved permits during 2022-23 financial year: 43

Recognition & Negotiations



Our newly-created team centres around supporting our Wadawurrung family – honouring and caring for our Elders; engaging and building relationships with Wadawurrung Members; and promoting the Culture, work and achievements of Wadawurrung to the Community. This year, we even held our first election.

Our pillar is responsible for Member and Elder services, Communications and Marketing, Treaty, Native Title, and the 2026 Commonwealth Games.

Our Membership continues to grow and become more engaged in the Corporation, whether it's through Member events, briefings and meetings, participation in various committees and working groups, or simply enjoying the monthly newsletter.

I want to celebrate the tremendous dedication of Us Supporting Us – the Member and Elder Services team, who have ensured our Elders stay engaged, connected and healthy, and who have also helped our Elders remain independent in their own homes, facilitated family reconnection, and enabled Culture to be passed on to the next generation.

Our Communications and Marketing team has been the bedrock of the Corporation – underpinning the work of all the other pillars, helping create conversations with Members, working alongside stakeholders and sharing our achievements with the public. In addition to expansive media coverage and increased website and social media traffic, our team produced beautiful videos, which will continue to tell the story of Wadawurrung for years to come.

While this year's achievements were immense, there was also sadness when the Commonwealth Games were cancelled. Our passionate Commonwealth Games team had worked hand-in-hand with various levels of government on every aspect, from venues and village design to

the Cultural undertakings required to co-host the Games. The cancellation was unexpected and has meant that Wadawurrung has lost the opportunity for truth telling and recognition on a world stage.

The Women's Gathering was an absolute highlight of the year. Watching generations of Wadawurrung women yarning, creating and sharing knowledge was incredibly special.

With Treaty negotiations expected to begin early in 2024, we are determined to create lasting Cultural, financial and wellbeing outcomes for all our Mob, and will seek to ensure these negotiations capture our collective vision for the future of Wadawurrung.

Rebekah Devlin

Recognition and Negotiations General Manager



Key Achievements

Member and Elder Services

The Us Supporting Us team of Aunty Joy Oldaker, Raylene Morrison and Jody Hand was established to assist Elders and Members to overcome daily challenges such as loneliness, isolation, and family and Cultural disconnection. The team also ensures all the Elders' daily needs are met through advocating and linking in with external supports, as necessary.

The team's mission is to provide Culturally safe and inclusive spaces and experiences for Elders to come together to share stories, feel safe and supported, passing on their wisdom and knowledge to Wadawurrung Members and the various pillars of the Corporation.

The funding supplied through WTOAC gives the opportunity to continually support the Elders and Wadawurrung Community to reconnect with each other and Country, ensuring Wadawurrung Culture remains strong. *Nyatne* to Aunty Joy, Raylene and Jody for the absolute devotion, hard work and love you show to all.

Timeline of events July 1st 2022 – June 30th 2023

*This list doesn't include Elders Support such as shopping general medical and hospital appointments, Aged-care Assessments, Council of Elders support, and transport.

2022	DECEMBER
JULY	05 Premiership Cup Geelong (Cultural Strengthening and Education)
07 NAIDOC Week Elders Lunch at Narana (Elders Support)	09 Elders Christmas Get together Werribee (Elders Support)
13 You Yangs Proposed Management (NRM)	2023
AUGUST	MARCH
16 Elders smoking education session Bostock (Elders Support)	14 Geelong Football Club closed training session Geelong (Elders Support)
SEPTMBER	30 Journey on Wadawurrung Country Elders Photos and Stories Ballarat (Cultural Strengthening and Education)
21 Portarlinton Pier (Elders Support)	APRIL
20 Possum Skin Cloak workshops Werribee (Elders Support)	04 Spargo Creek Art installation (Elders Support)
OCTOBER	6 & 7 Corroboree Ballarat (Cultural Strengthening and Education)
11 & 12 Prescribed Burn Training Bannockburn (Healthy Country Team)	10 Melbourne Water Burn Werribee (Healthy Country Team)
17 Possum Skin Cloak workshops Werribee (Elders Support)	20 Women's Workshop Ballarat (Commonwealth Games and Elders Support)
21 Anglesea Heath (NRM)	31 Aboriginal Remembrance Service Melbourne (Elders Support)
26 Art Exhibition Ballarat (Elders Support)	JUNE
27 Art Exhibition Ballarat (Elders Support)	22 Uncle Mel's Birthday Get Together Geelong (Elders Support)
NOVEMBER	
07 Women's Business Torquay (Elders support)	
11 Possum Skin Cloak workshops Werribee (Elders Support)	
22 Tree Planting Day Wyndham Vale (NRM)	
25 Possum Skin Cloak workshops Werribee (Elders Support)	

Communication Activities

Djilang Advertiser

To celebrate NAIDOC week, the Geelong Advertiser renamed its masthead to the *Djilang Advertiser*. WTOAC also had the opportunity to submit a column for the week's first publication.

Member Newsletters

From November 2022, Member newsletters have been consistently published on a monthly basis. The Communications and Marketing team has redesigned the newsletter, and it has been fantastic to see the increase in engagement with Members, and receive contributions from people wanting to share their achievements and news.

Cultural Heritage Filming

In February 2023, the Communications team conducted filming on Wadawurrung Country with the goal of producing multiple videos about Cultural Heritage. These videos will be available to Members for two primary purposes: sharing Cultural knowledge and supporting recruitment marketing efforts for vacancies at WTOAC.

Common Ground Collaboration

The Communications team collaborated with Common Ground, a First Nations not-for-profit organisation to create a video about Bostock, the Wadawurrung Property near Ballan. Two days of filming at Bostock involved WTOAC staff who are Traditional Owners, along with Aunty Glenda. The video showcases Culture and what takes place on Country out at Bostock, including the nursery development, water investigations, and the land that is available to Wadawurrung Traditional Owners to camp on and enjoy.

The Common Ground collaboration also presented a valuable opportunity for WTOAC staff to develop their skills in pre- and post-production, filming and facilitation.

Nyatne to Holly Earl, Matthew Chatterton and Jenna Ahmat for their vision, enthusiasm, sensitivity and heart in bringing these stories to life.



Jamie McPherson and Macaylah Johnson at the Wadawurrung Property in Ballan.



Aunty Joy Oldaker in Birmingham



Aunty Mary Shuttleworth and Macaylah Johnson at the opening of the Commonwealth Games Organising Committee headquarters opening.



Filming at the Wadawurrung Property in Ballan with Common Ground.



Commonwealth Games

WTOAC was invited to participate in the closing ceremony for the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, England. WTOAC, including Elder and Membership Relationship Coordinator Aunty Joy Oldaker, participated in the Flag Handover Ceremony, and other ceremonies signifying the official handover of the Commonwealth Games from Birmingham to Victoria.

WTOAC's commitment to the Commonwealth Games meant that we were required to participate in workshops, meetings and forums and two full-time staff were appointed in 2022 to lead the implementation of the Vic2026 Plan and activities for which WTOAC was responsible. Commonwealth Games Project Officers Macaylah Johnson and Jamie McPherson supported place-based activities and sharing of information with local First Peoples' community groups and businesses, ensuring First Peoples were at the centre of the Games.

The Victoria 2026 Commonwealth Games Organising Committee opened its headquarters in Djilang on Monday December 5, which was attended by Macaylah Johnston and Jamie McPherson, as well as Aunty Mary Shuttleworth and Krystal Robinson who conducted Welcome to Country and Smoking Ceremonies.

Nyatne to Macaylah and Jamie for all their dedication and creativity in ensuring Wadawurrung Culture was at the heart of the Commonwealth Games.

Wadawurrung Women's Gathering

As part of the preparations for the Commonwealth Games, of which up to 70% of events were taking place on of Wadawurrung Country, a women's gathering was created to share Cultural knowledge and spend time together, which connects to *Gobata bengadak tjaava* – Us supporting us. On Saturday May 20, through the coordination of Macaylah Johnson, a women's gathering was hosted at Mair St in Ballarat, where Wadawurrung women came together to yarn, weave and, create adornments and ceremonial skirts with emu feathers. This was such a special occasion for the Elders, young ones and everyone in between who attended as we witnessed Culture being passed on through the generations. Congratulations to Macaylah, Jamie, Jody, Raylene and Kelly-Ann Blake for helping bring this event to life, and to Aunty Trina Dalton for sharing and teaching her incredible weaving skills.

Below image: Hazel Zanatta, Sarah Coots and Aunty Trina Dalton Oogjes.

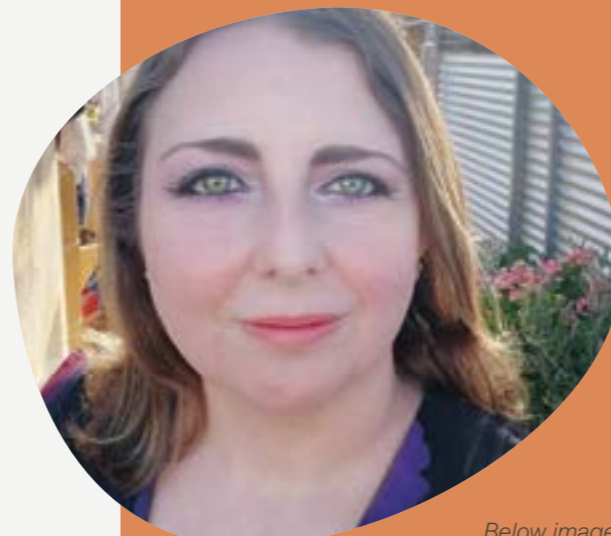


Above image: Aunty Marj James, baby Mayarli Rotumah-Onus, and Kait James.



Left image: Shannen Mennen, Kelly-Ann Blake and Danae Coots.

Right image: Uncle Norm McPherson, Aunty Joy Oldaker, and Jody Hand.



Right image: Lynette Fagan.



Below image: Samuel Smits.

First Peoples Assembly of Victoria Elections, May – June 2023

Election of our Reserve Seat holder

Firstly, our heartfelt thanks to Sean Fagan, who represented WTOAC with passion, strength and commitment in the inaugural term of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, which laid the foundations for the framework of Treaty negotiations.

For Assembly 2.0, we had five Traditional Owners nominate for the Wadawurrung Reserve Seat - Uncle Bryon Powell, Uncle Alby Zantuck, Rebecca Famlonga, Jody Hand and Samuel Smits. We held our first ever election, and 112 Members voted online, in-person, via post and phone.

Uncle Bryon was elected as the Reserve Seat holder and was sworn in to the FPAV in July. He has already joined numerous committees and is working hard to ensure Wadawurrung voices and ambitions are represented in a strong, collaborative and heartfelt manner.

Statewide elections

WTOAC is immensely proud of the Traditional Owners who participated in the statewide First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria elections - Uncle Norm McPherson, Aunty Joy Oldaker, Jody Hand, Lynette Fagan and Samuel Smits. Prior to 2023, Wadawurrung had never had a Member stand for a Community seat, and this year WTOAC had five candidates across three regions. The vote turnout was notably strong across the state during the election, and although Wadawurrung was not successful in securing Community seats this time, it was encouraging to witness the enthusiastic participation of Members in the electoral process.

We look forward to seeing the tangible and lasting outcomes Treaty will bring for not only our Wadawurrung community, but to all First People across the state.



Uncle Bryon Powell

2022-23 Financial Report Extract

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income

For the year ended 30 June 2023

		Consolidated	
	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
REVENUE	3	16,939,183	9,624,339
EXPENSES			
Accommodation		(141,535)	(67,920)
Bad Debts		(266,396)	–
Consulting		(927,964)	(436,901)
Employee benefits expense	4	(7,147,332)	(4,072,893)
Depreciation expense		(478,302)	(279,371)
Motor Vehicle expenses		(363,266)	(225,821)
Professional Fees		(593,490)	(224,150)
Rent		(14,934)	(16,440)
Event costs		(122,385)	(133,539)
Repairs & Maintenance		(42,905)	(52,945)
Travelling expenses		(47,887)	(37,317)
Member support		(116,720)	(56,742)
Other expenses	4	(56,742)	(56,742)
Surplus before income tax expense		5,780,909	3,553,295
Income tax expense	1	–	–
Surplus after income tax expense for the year attributable to the Corporation		5,780,909	3,553,295
Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax		–	–
Total comprehensive income for the year attributable to the Corporation		5,780,909	3,553,295

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Statement of financial position

As at 30 June 2023

		Consolidated	
	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
ASSETS			
Current Assets			
Cash and cash equivalents	5	7,396,604	6,156,496
Financial assets	6	6,123,897	4,599,865
Trade and other receivables	7	1,709,497	622,691
Other	8	20,712	14,482
Total current assets		15,250,710	11,393,534
Non-current Assets			
Property, plant and equipment	9	4,885,687	4,041,124
Total non-current assets		4,885,687	4,041,124
Total assets		20,136,397	15,434,658
LIABILITIES			
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	10	1,263,711	627,182
Employee Benefits	13	362,042	228,342
Leases	12	108,723	42,005
Other	11	–	2,130,600
Total current liabilities		1,734,476	3,028,129
Non-current Liabilities			
Employee Benefits	13	233,472	138,479
Borrowings	14	–	144,541
Leases	12	299,261	35,230
Total non-current liabilities		537,733	318,250
Total liabilities		2,267,209	3,346,379
NET ASSETS		17,869,188	12,088,279
Equity			
Retained surpluses		17,869,188	12,088,279
Total equity		17,869,188	12,088,279

2022-23 Financials

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Statement of changes in equity

As at 30 June 2023

	Consolidated	
	Retained surpluses \$	Total Equity \$
Balance at 1 July 2022	12,088,279	12,088,279
Surplus after income tax expense for the year	5,780,909	5,780,909
Total comprehensive income for the year	5,780,909	5,780,909
Balance at 30 June 2023	17,869,188	17,869,188
	Retained surpluses \$	Total Equity \$
Balance at 1 July 2021	8,534,984	8,534,984
Surplus after income tax expense for the year	3,553,295	3,553,295
Total comprehensive income for the year	3,553,295	3,553,295
Balance at 30 June 2022	12,088,279	12,088,279

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Statement of cash flows

For the year ended 30 June 2023

		Consolidated	
	Note	2023 \$	2022 \$
Cash flows from operating activities			
Receipts from customers		13,670,275	8,006,255
Payments to suppliers and employees		(9,788,057)	(5,651,343)
Interest received		24,054	13,442
Interest paid		(4,811)	(7,096)
Net cash from operating activities	22	3,901,461	2,361,258
Cash flows from investing activities			
Payments for property, plant and equipment		(905,397)	(869,910)
Proceeds from disposal of property, plant and equipment		7,273	–
Purchase of investments		(1,504,121)	(13,433)
Net cash used in investing activities		(2,402,645)	(883,343)
Cash flows from financing activities			
Payment of lease liability		(114,167)	(47,500)
Repayment of Borrowings		(144,541)	–
Net cash used in financing activities		(258,708)	(47,500)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		1,240,108	1,430,415
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year		6,156,496	4,726,081
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year	5	7,396,604	6,156,496



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE DIRECTORS OF WADAWURRUNG TRADITIONAL OWNERS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
AND CONTROLLED ENTITIES

Opinion

We have audited the consolidated financial report of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and Controlled Entities (the Corporation), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023, the statement of comprehensive income and the statement of changes in equity for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies, and the declaration by Directors.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report presents fairly, in all material respects, including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the corporation's financial position as at 30 June 2023 and of its financial performance for the year ended; and
- (ii) complying with *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report section of our report. We are independent of the Corporation in accordance with the auditor independence requirements of *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* and the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110 Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 of the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report is prepared to assist the Corporation in meeting the requirements of *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006*. As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our report is intended solely for the Corporation and should not be distributed to or used by parties other than the Corporation. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

Responsibilities of Management and Directors

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of the financial report in accordance with *Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006* and for such internal control as management determines is necessary to enable the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.



INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE DIRECTORS OF WADAWURRUNG TRADITIONAL OWNERS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
AND CONTROLLED ENTITIES

In preparing the financial report, management is responsible for assessing the Corporation's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Directors either intend to liquidate the Corporation or to cease operations, or has no realistic alternative but to do so.

The Directors are responsible for overseeing the Corporation's financial reporting process.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of the financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Corporation's internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of managements' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Corporation's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Corporation to cease to continue as a going concern.

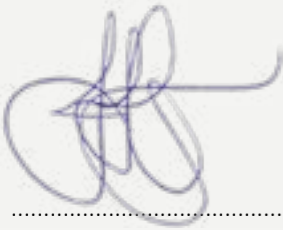
INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT
TO THE DIRECTORS OF WADAWURRUNG TRADITIONAL OWNERS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION
AND CONTROLLED ENTITIES

- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.

We communicate with the Directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

We also provide the Directors with a statement that we have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence, and to communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on our independence, and where applicable, related safeguards.

CountPro Audit Pty Ltd
CountPro Audit Pty Ltd



Jason Hargreaves
Director

180 Eleanor Drive, Lucas VIC 3350

11th September 2023



Left image:
Ash Skinner

Right image: Corrina
Eccles and Aunty
Mary Shuttleworth



Below image:
Aunty Glenda Eccles



Right image:
Greg and
Uncle Mel
Robinson



Below image:
Uncle Bert Fagan



Above image: Macaylah
Johnson and Jamie
McPherson



Left image: Sophie
Comerford and
Rebekah Devlin



Right image:
Matthew
Chatterton and
BJ O'Toole





Wadawurrung
Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation

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