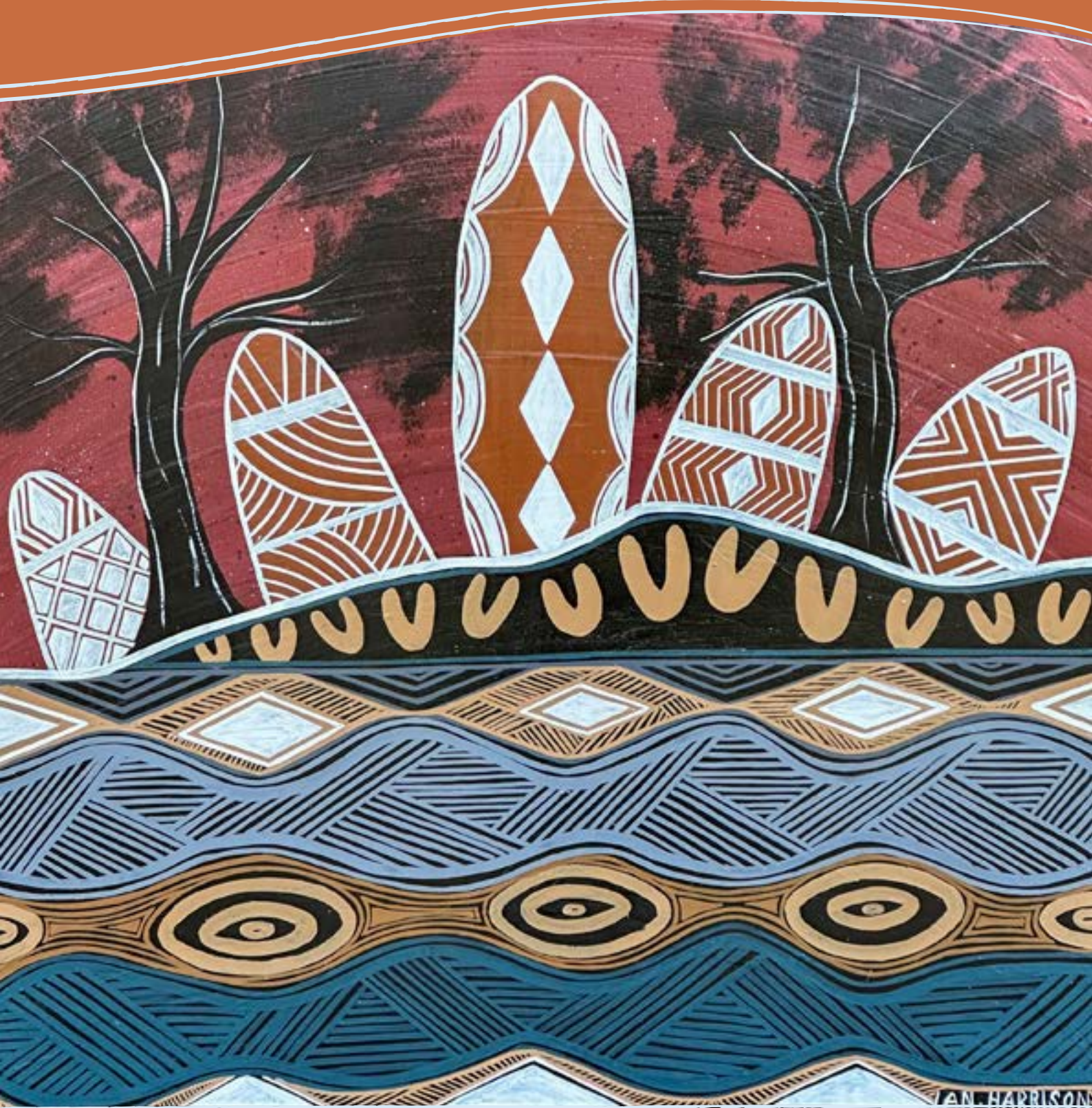


Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government
Joint Management Plan

The next five years

2025—2030



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On Country, Ian Harrison



Our Pathway, Ian Harrison



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Gunaikurnai and Victorian Government Joint Management Plan

A guide to implementation and planning
2025–2030





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Introduction

We acknowledge the Gunaikurnai people as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the Country referred to in this review, and pay our respects to Elders past, present, and emerging. Gunaikurnai people have one of the oldest living cultures in the world, with that culture being passed down the generations. Gunaikurnai culture is embedded in Country, which is vital to Gunaikurnai identity. Caring for Country is at the heart of feeling connected to Country, and we give our thanks for the tens of thousands of years that the Gunaikurnai people have cared for the beautiful forests, rivers, beaches, plants, and animals that make up Gunaikurnai Country. We recognise that this caring for Country, and the Gunaikurnai people's connection to Country, was traumatically disrupted through colonisation, and that the Gunaikurnai people have never ceded their sovereignty.



Joint Management is a Partnership. Every year the partners gather to reflect on the past 12 months and plan the following years work.

The signing in 2010 of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) between the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC), on behalf of the Gunaikurnai people, and the Victorian government, was the first step in 'making this right', towards Gunaikurnai self-determination. One of the outcomes of the RSA was the handing back of ten parks and reserves to the Gunaikurnai people, to be jointly managed by GLaWAC and the State. The Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB) was also established to guide the development of Joint Management plans for these parks and to coordinate the monitoring and evaluation of its implementation.

The first job for the GKTOLMB was to develop a Joint Management Plan for those ten parks and reserves with its Joint Management partners – GLaWAC, the then-Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Parks Victoria, and the Knob Recreation Reserve Management Committee Inc. That Joint Management Plan was the first of its kind in Victoria, and was approved by the Victorian Minister for Energy, Environment, and Climate Change in September 2018.

A lot has happened in the first five years of Joint Management, not only on Gunaikurnai Country, but more broadly across Victorian and Australian communities. It is a good time for us to reflect on what has happened, to celebrate all that we have achieved together, and to learn what we can do better for the next five years. We hope it will also help those who are newer to Joint Management to

understand where we have come from, where we are heading, and why.

We thank everyone who has been involved in Joint Management since the beginning, and for your ongoing dedication and commitment to Gunaikurnai people once again leading the care of their Country every day.

In 2023 the GKTOLMB commissioned Social Ventures Australia to perform a review of the first 5 years of the Gunaikurnai Joint Management Plan. The Karobran Partnership Committee, comprising senior representatives from GLaWAC, Parks Victoria, The Knob Reserve Management Committee Inc, Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Change, and the GKTOLMB, was the project steering committee for the review, and has endorsed this review result. The review has also been formally adopted by the GKTOLMB.

The Board is grateful for the contributions made by the Gunaikurnai community, senior staff and Board members of the partnership organisations and the ranger teams. Together these contributions built a powerful and fulsome picture of what Joint Management has meant for Gunaikurnai people, and what we need to do in the next 5 years to make self-determination a reality. This guide is the result of that work, and will underpin the JMP implementation and planning for the next 5 years.

We are committed to building on the great work done in the JM partnership to ensure that Gunaikurnai are leading the care of their country every day.

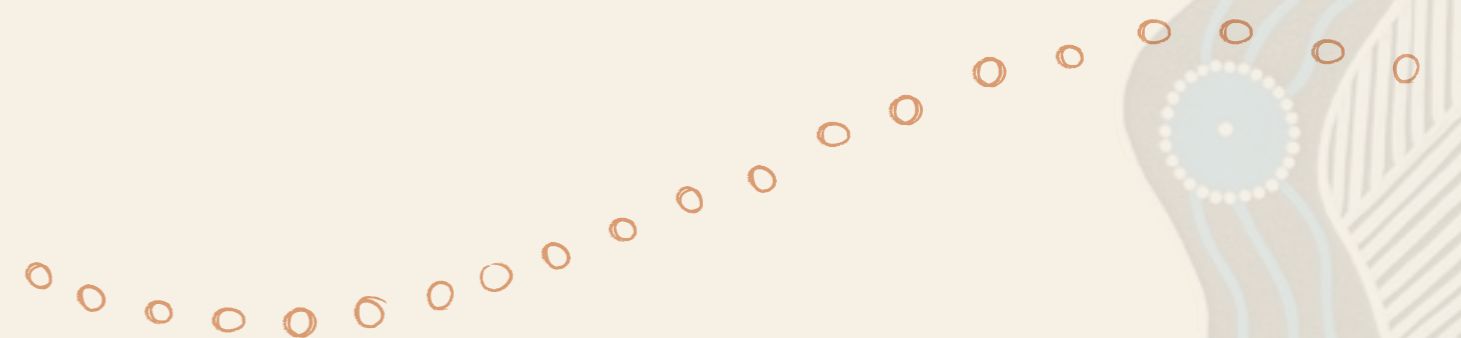
How to read this document

This document is a direct result of the 5 year review of the JMP. We collected the stories and experiences of as many people as possible about how the first 5 years of joint management was working for them. At the same time, GLaWAC and the Victorian Government have reached agreement to bring 4 additional parks under joint management – the Alpine National Park south of the Great Dividing Range, Avon Wilderness, Baw Baw National Park and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Reserve. The review and the new parks have given us the chance to reset the strategic framework for joint management, learning from the past to create a better future. This framework gives us the objectives to work towards through implementation plans, annual works plans and the individual parks plans.

The most significant change to come out of the review is a proposal to update the Theory of Change strategic model in the JMP to The Storyline for Joint Management. The first section of this document introduces the Storyline, and then individually suggests 10 new objectives, where they came from and what action they will inspire.

You do not need to know about the original Theory of Change to be able to understand the Storyline. However, it is important to honour the important role the Theory of Change model played in these first 5 years. Appendix 2 does this by reminding us what the Theory of Change looks like and its role as the foundation of the JM strategy.

We also feel it is important to honour the input people had into the 5 year review by presenting the methodology and the data as part of this document and, importantly, how we have considered each of the outcomes from the Theory of Change when creating the story line. Appendices 3, 4 and 5 are about the data we collected for this review, both oral and written, and how we use the past 5 years to inspire the work of the next 5 years.



A new storyline for the next chapter in Joint Management

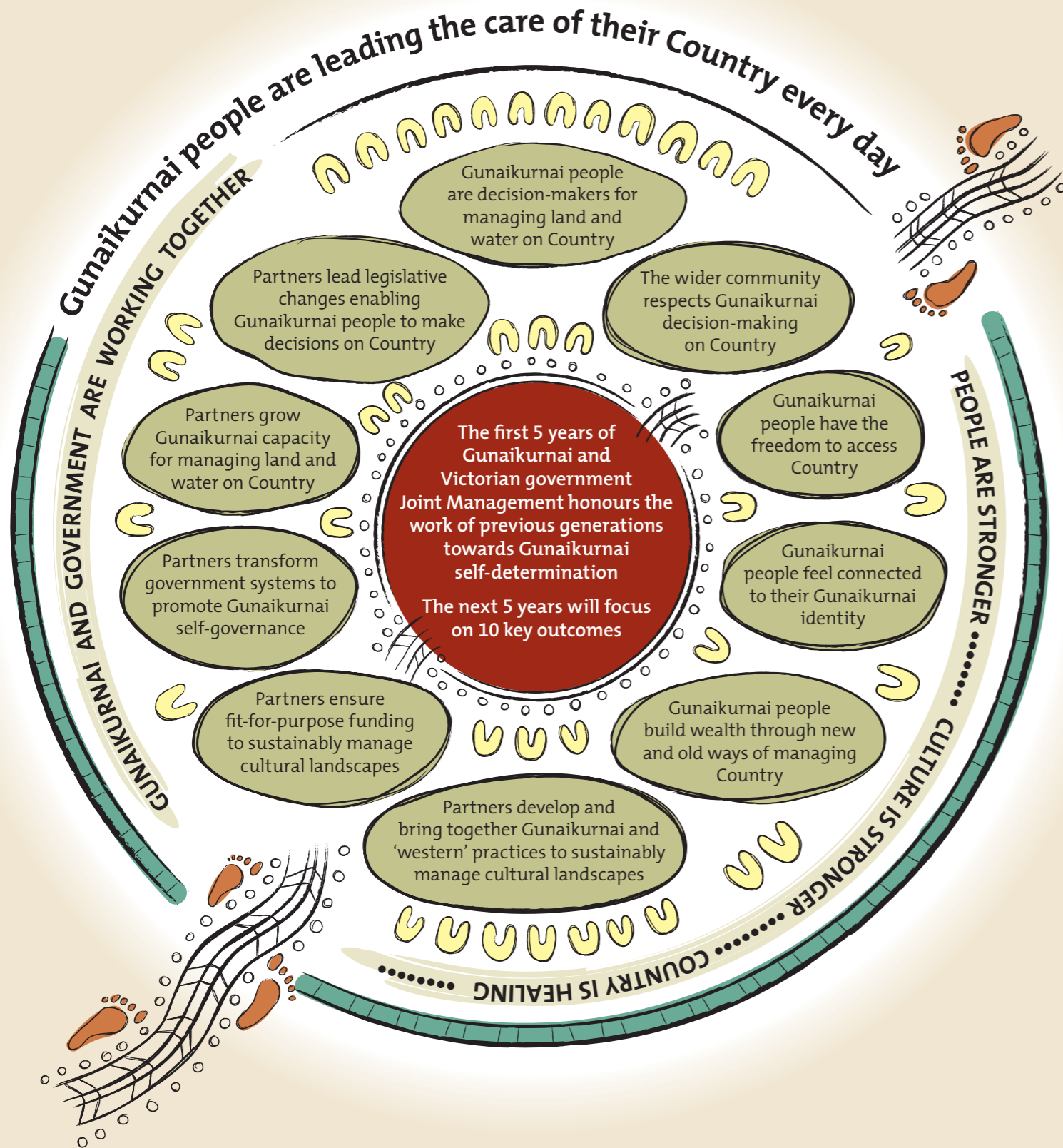


Figure 1: The storyline of Joint Management for the next five years

The picture in Figure 1 that has emerged from this review as our guiding storyline for the next five years. You will notice that while it builds on the old picture (Appendix 2), there are a few important differences. (Note that Appendix 4 details how each outcome in the old picture was considered in creating the new storyline.) The most obvious difference is that it is now in a circular form. This for us reflects visually the gradual bridging between 'western' and Gunaikurnai worldviews among Joint Management partners. It portrays the inherent interdependence between the four themes of People, Culture, Country, and Working Together, as well as between each of the ten new outcomes. This circular form also depicts the non-linear and iterative way in which change happens. The centre honours where we have come from and points to the ten key outcomes we will collectively focus on for the next five years, on our way towards our aspirations for People, Culture, Country, and Working Together, and our vision of Gunaikurnai people leading the care of their Country every day.

This new storyline is also less busy. The maturing of our partnership over these past five years means that we are now comfortable with less being more. The work of Joint Management encompasses much more, of course, than the ten outcomes highlighted in the storyline. What this storyline does is to help us focus on what matters most for our next chapter. In addition, it gives us a simple and effective way to share with many different groups of people why Joint Management exists and what we are here to do.

Looking a little closer, you will notice that the words we use are subtly different from those in the Theory of Change. We will explore this in more detail outcome by outcome in the remainder of this report, but we will call out a few differences here. The gradual bridging

between our worldviews means that we have an increasingly shared understanding of the evolving boundaries of Joint Management, and the bigger change for which Joint Management is a vehicle. We use the term 'cultural landscape', adopted by UNESCO, to bridge the 'western' view of Natural Resource Management and the Gunaikurnai view of Caring for Country. We expand land management to land and water management, explicitly acknowledging that one goes with the other. This aligns with the important work with other Traditional Owners across Victoria that resulted in the publication in 2021 of the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy. The interwoven aspirations for People, Culture, and Country are strongly inspired by that strategy. And our vision is identical to that defined by the GKTOLMB in its 2021-2026 strategy.

We will use this new storyline in the rest of the report to tell the story, outcome by outcome, of what we have learned in Joint Management over the past five years and what matters most for the next five years. Similarly to the document we produced following the 2022 annual reflection workshop, this report seeks to capture, using our own voices, the rich diversity and nuance of our different perspectives. Importantly, it also includes the voices of some members of community who are not directly involved in Joint Management. (Note that Appendix 5 contains a comprehensive summary of the consultations conducted for this review.)

What happens next

Our hope for this storyline is that it will resonate with every person working in Joint Management, no matter which partner we are with, no matter where we sit in the organisation, no matter how long we have been involved. Each of us may have a slightly different understanding of what the words mean, of how we contribute to each of the outcomes in the work that we do. Our hope is that we have found the right balance between clarity and flexibility, so that it will gently align the work that we do together. We also intend to use this storyline to share the story of Joint Management with the wider community, adapting some of the language.

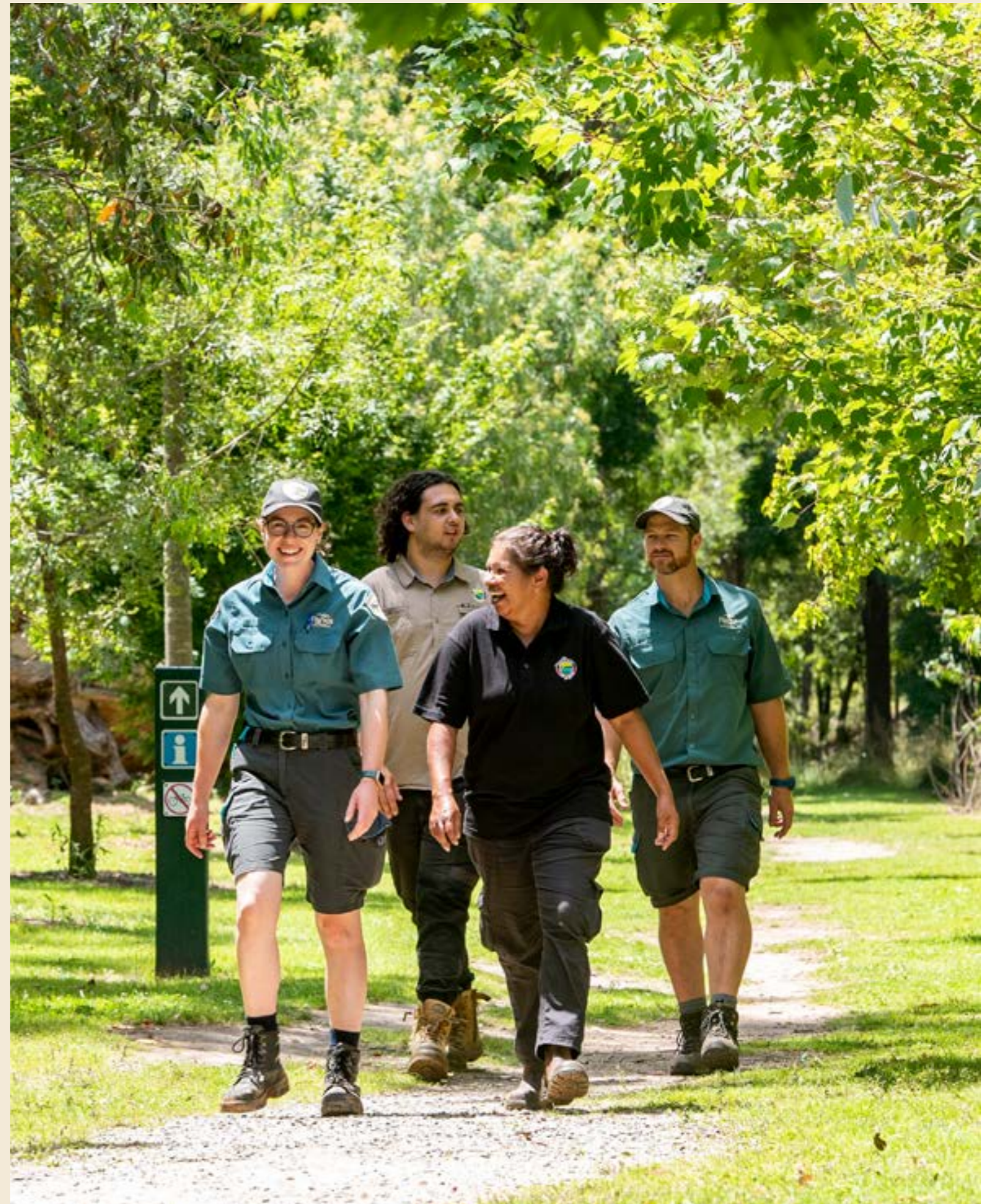
Knowing what we are aiming towards is critical. But it is pointless if we don't translate it into our everyday work.

You will see that for each of the outcomes, we have proposed one or two ideas on how to track our progress from year to year. These are only initial ideas as, depending on progress, it may be helpful to adjust them as we go. They will be further refined as we develop our new five-year strategic plan for the Joint Management Plan. Each team – whether across or within partner organisations – will define their specific contribution through their activities towards each of the ten outcomes. For some outcomes, one team may be a clear lead with others in supporting roles. For other outcomes, there may be several teams with complementary contributions.

This document will guide the future implementation of the JMP, along with the planning work for the 4 additional parks and the updated JMP Strategic Plan. Our Karoobran (Together) Partnership Committee will track progress and decide on adjustments as needed throughout the year, and our annual reflection workshops will continue to offer the opportunity for us to come together as a whole, to reflect on what we have learned and what we can do better.

**Buchan Munji –
Krauatungulung Country.**

GLaWAC and Parks Victoria
rangers share knowledge and
work closely with each other.





The storyline in detail...



— Outcome 1 —

The wider community respects Gunaikurnai decision-making on Country

We start with this outcome, which recognises the importance of a stakeholder that is not explicitly a Joint Management partner but whose support is critical to all that we do: the wider community.

In the written survey conducted in November 2022 with Joint Management partners, a strong majority – around 90% of the 34 respondents – thought that Joint Management had likely or very likely contributed towards the Gippsland community and partners having a growing awareness and appreciation for Gunaikurnai culture and history.

We believe that there are two aspects that directly contribute towards this. The first is the level of visibility of the Gunaikurnai cultural landscape in Joint Managed areas. As one community Elder shared:

“Visitors now know that they are stepping onto Gunaikurnai Country and this demands a greater level of respect.”

While significant progress has been made – through projects such as totem pole installations or the Buchan Caves interpretation plan, to name just two – there is still much work to do. The Knob Recreation Reserve is one of the most visible Joint Managed areas to the wider community, it has clear Gunaikurnai signage, and it is also where Gunaikurnai cultural events such as NAIDOC community day are held regularly. However, one member of the Committee of Management shared that the respect and understanding still have some way to go, reporting some recent complaints regarding a Gunaikurnai-led activity from the wider community on social media. A GKTOLMB member also talked about ongoing vandalism in some Joint Managed areas:

“If you’re brought up proper, you respect Country. It’s part of cultural obligations.”

We need to convey across the parks that we manage the broader Gippsland landscape. These rules aren’t written there when you enter the Joint Managed areas but maybe they should be.

A second aspect is in how present Gunaikurnai rangers are in Joint Managed areas. As one GLaWAC member said:

“Having a presence on Country... people see that, they show more respect when we’re there, we need to get up there more, we need to be there.”

The eight new Joint Management ranger positions within GLaWAC, secured this year as part of the early outcomes of the RSA renegotiations, may contribute towards



Buchan Munji
– Krauatungulung Country

Gunaikurnai rangers are updating park signage across JM Country to clearly identify this as Gunaikurnai Country.

this increased presence. But we need to temper our expectations, as one GLaWAC member advised:

“ We’ve got seven rangers across ten parks, just got handed another four [parks]. It’s hard to spread ourselves over this land, let alone do all this other stuff, let alone Sea Country. It’s good that we’re going to employ eight more rangers. But it takes time to train them all up.

We also know that we are on Gunaikurnai Country if we see rangers with Gunaikurnai branding on their uniforms. Dual branding on all Joint Management ranger uniforms, whether they are employed by PV, or by GLaWAC, was recently approved. As one Parks Victoria (PV) member shared, this is a

huge achievement, given how long it has taken:

“ Elders [have long wanted] to see rangers with dual branding... we just got that... I nearly burst into tears knowing how long of a journey it’s been... we’re finally seeing great progress.

Looking ahead, our aspiration is for the wider community to not only respect Gunaikurnai culture, but to respect Gunaikurnai decision-making on Country. While this may seem ambitious, we believe that what we have achieved to date together with the shifts in the broader political landscape – Yoorrook, Treaty, and the Voice – mean that we can make this happen in the coming five years.

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

There are at least two ways to see we are succeeding in moving towards this outcome. One is in elevating the visibility of the Gunaikurnai cultural landscape across all Joint Managed areas. We will successfully complete the Buchan and New Guinea Caves interpretation plans and roll these out to the other original Joint Managed areas, as well as put in place a minimum level of Gunaikurnai signage across the four new Joint Managed areas. Another is in ensuring that visitors to the Joint Managed areas consistently see people with Gunaikurnai branding. We will implement the dual branding for all Joint Management staff. We will also do our best to train and keep filled all 16 Gunaikurnai ranger positions, making it their first priority to be regularly caring for Country across the 14 Joint Managed areas.



JM Rangers at Corringale Foreshore Reserve – Krauatungalung Country.

GLaWAC Rangers have been placing “5 poles” at each of the JM parks. Each pole represents one of the 5 clans of the Gunaikurnai and in time will include cultural interpretation relevant to that park.

Gunaiakurnai people have the freedom to access Country

“ To heal Country, we need to heal people.
And to heal people, we need to get them out here.

This is how one GLaWAC member beautifully expressed the interdependence between people and Country, and how important it is for Gunaiakurnai people to be on Country.

In the 2022 survey, roughly two-thirds of respondents thought that Joint Management had likely or very likely contributed to increasing the use of parks by Gunaiakurnai people. Collecting direct quantitative data to track progress on this outcome continues to be a challenge for us. However, we believe we have identified and are addressing the underlying barriers to Gunaiakurnai people accessing Country.

One part of being able to be on Country is for Country to be accessible. As one Elder remarked, citing the theme for this year's NAIDOC celebrations:

“ We want to see more parks with shelter and facilities, accessible with pathways...
For Our Elders!

Some interviewees talked about the freedom to access Country being true in practice, not just in theory. One community member remarked:

“ All the booking process is under PV... we can't just go down there, even though it's Native Title.

This was echoed by a GLaWAC member:

“ A lot of parks we don't get to go to because we don't have a key... it should be automatic, we shouldn't have to ask and wait for it.

Access to Country can also come down to having the right logistics in place. GLaWAC

regularly organises buses for community located around Gunaiakurnai Country so that they can participate in events such as NAIDOC celebrations at the Knob Reserve. The right logistics are also needed for Gunaiakurnai people working in Joint Management. As one PV member shared:

“ It's difficult to get On Country works to happen west of Bairnsdale. These parks are more removed from where GLaWAC's base is, where people live, where their relationships are. There are also areas that are more remote and hard to get to, it's several hours to come and go back. We understand that... we've been focusing our tasks with Gunaiakurnai rangers so that they can stay overnight.

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

We will continue to break down the barriers to Gunaiakurnai people accessing Country. We will progressively complete and deliver the masterplans for each Joint Managed area. In doing this, we will take into account what community wants, including specific needs for accessible infrastructure. We will also continue to be proactive in the access and logistics that we offer for Gunaiakurnai people working in Joint Management, as well as for the broader Gunaiakurnai community. Building up the capacity of our Joint Management base in the Latrobe Valley is a priority.

Mitchell River National Park
– Brabralung Country.
The Amphitheater as seen
from Billy Goat Bend.



Gunaikurnai people feel connected to their Gunaikurnai identity

Almost all interviewees emphasised the importance of this outcome, while acknowledging its interconnectedness with the previous outcome. In the words of one GLaWAC member:

“*The biggest thing is being connected to Country, connected to Community.*”

While the 2022 survey did not address this outcome directly, we have strong evidence of the contribution of Joint Management towards this outcome through the eyes of Gunaikurnai people working as Joint Management rangers. During the 2022 annual reflection workshop, Gunaikurnai rangers shared:

“*We’re proud to be working on Country, working with family, every day.*”

This sense of connectedness and pride is foundational for growth. As one GLaWAC member reflected:

“*This may not sound like a big achievement, but it is an essential foundational element...Feeling connected leads to more confidence and more courage...Joint Management has given some focus so that we can make changes in our own lives...It’s given us freedom to think, freedom to have a bit of an attitude.*”

A number of Gunaikurnai Elders also spoke of how they saw Joint Management contributing towards feeling more connected:

“*People are learning culture, connecting with mob through events on Country... Joint Management fosters this connection.*”

“*Joint Management equals self-determination. That is immensely powerful for us Gunaikurnai.*”

Interviewees recognised, though, that progress towards this outcome is uneven across Gunaikurnai Country. As stated by one GLaWAC member:

“*The challenge – and opportunity, of course – with the four new Joint Managed parks in the west, will be to engage with a different demographic of mob in Latrobe Valley in particular...we don’t have a strong enough connection with the mob down there. We need to help a mob that are already less engaged with us to be more engaged with us.*”

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

The four new Joint Managed areas are a priority. As mentioned for the previous outcome above, building up the capacity of our Joint Management base in the Latrobe Valley to care for those four areas is critical. We will continue actively identifying opportunities to increase connection in the work we do, one example being the Tarra Bulga cultural interpretation plan. We will also continue to reach out to Gunaikurnai people working in Joint Management and the broader Gunaikurnai community to hear their stories about the experiences related to Joint Management that make them feel proud to be Gunaikurnai. This will help us

understand what matters most for them, so that we can prioritise it in what we do. For those working in Joint Management, it might be an anonymous survey ahead of the annual reflection workshop or stories shared during the workshop itself. For the broader community, it might be through an annual social media or in-person campaign, linked to NAIDOC week celebrations.

**Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park
– Tatungalung Country.**

Capturing and recording traditional knowledge is an important objective within the Joint Management Plan.



— Outcome 4 —

Gunaiakurnai people build wealth through new and old ways of managing Country

One of the first five-year goals in the Joint Management Plan was for Joint Management to create jobs and business opportunities for Gunaikurnai people. This connects with the strategic goal in the Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country plan to be economically independent, breaking the cycle of dependence that was created by colonisation.

Over 90% of respondents to the 2022 survey believe that Joint Management is creating jobs and business opportunities for Gunaikurnai people. Community members and Joint Management partners who were interviewed affirmed this view. As one community member shared:

“ We’ve seen more jobs for Gunaikurnai... there is an understanding that a ranger job is not necessarily the end goal, but can be a first step towards something else.

One GLaWAC member highlighted the professional growth seen in some of their colleagues through Joint Management:

“ They’ve never used computers in their life, now they are a tech whiz, they’ve got their licence!

But as a number of GLaWAC members shared, there is also a need to create more entry-level pathways to address some of the barriers for other community members:

“ If we look at all our people, so and so wants a job here, but hasn’t got a licence, doesn’t want to do a drug test, or can’t read or write, so they’re not applying for that. They should be able to feel like they can apply for a crew job in a crew organisation... We need better roles, younger fellas coming through... They can get a bit lost, it’s good to get them direct to GLaWAC... Joint Management gives you opportunity, more freedom.

This sentiment was seconded by a community Elder:

“ We need to get more young ones into jobs. It starts with motivating them: if you want to work, you will. One way is to have more opportunities in GLaWAC.

Prioritising circular income was voiced by several GLaWAC members:

“ If we want stuff done in our Joint Management parks, we should give the contract to NRM. Keep everything in-house, all money stays here. If we contract out to someone else, we need to have a crew person work there. Needs to be the way it happens.

Several GKTOLMB and GLaWAC members spoke about the need to shift the language, going beyond the narrow lens of economic interdependence to encompass the broader concept of wealth. They also spoke about the importance of staying open to new opportunities, from becoming leaders in cultural tourism or collaborating in academic research on cultural interpretations, to generating innovation in the environmental sector. In the words of this GLaWAC member:

“ We need to think about opportunities for our mob that can grow from Joint Management. For us to grow. That can stimulate the creation of new businesses. Alleviate our mob out of poverty. We don’t want to overburden

ourselves, but we can look at what’s happening with indigenous mobs outside Victoria, even overseas, to make sure we’re thinking outside the box, trying something different... what opportunities are there for investment, tech transfer, increased market access?

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

One way for us to track this is in monitoring the total revenues generated by Gunaikurnai-led enterprises from year to year. Another way is in tracking the systematic implementation across all levels of government partners of policies like the first right of refusal for Gunaikurnai people. Within Gunaikurnai partners, we will prioritise circular income wherever feasible. All partners will proactively pursue new opportunities for Gunaikurnai people to build wealth.



Buchan Munji
– Krauatungulung Country
GLaWAC hold cultural days where all staff come to reconnect with their country.



— Outcome 5 —

Partners develop
and bring together
Gunaikurnai and
'western' practices
to sustainably
manage cultural
landscapes

There were several outcomes in the original theory of change that spoke to embedding Gunaikurnai cultural knowledge, management practices and values into Joint Management practices. Over the past five years, there has been significant progress towards these outcomes.

Over 90% of respondents in the 2022 survey stated that they believe that Joint Management is drawing on Gunaikurnai knowledge, values and practices to care for Country.

One example of this is the Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers) Camping and Access Strategy, developed jointly by GLaWAC and PV, that won the Award of Excellence in Land Management at the 2022 Victorian Landscape Architecture Awards. Several people cited this as best practice in Joint Management. As one GLaWAC member remarked:

“Doing cultural mapping first and using that to inform future management... we should be doing that everywhere.

A second example is the two-way learning that has taken place in fire management. A GLaWAC fire crew was established, trained, and deployed during the 2019-2020 bushfires, and continues to grow in capacity. At the same time, the Gunaikurnai Cultural Fire Strategy has been developed in complement to the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy, and is being implemented through the delivery of cultural burns on Country. This enables DEECA and PV staff to learn about the importance of Cultural Fire for the Gunaikurnai people, as well as to understand its role in managing, protecting, and healing Country. One PV member shared:

“I had the opportunity to go on Country and talk about different views of what

fire management looks like... we had a really enriching discussion that happened quite organically... I came away with a much better understanding of just how intricate the use of fire for cultural objectives is and how it could be applied very practically to effectively manage Country.

Another PV member recounted what he had learned about what it means to manage a cultural landscape:

“There was an incident a few years ago when a few hundred wedge-tailed eagles were poisoned by a private landowner... I was talking to an Elder down the street, he was a big imposing fella, to see him quivering in tears, saying “they were my Elders that they killed”. It gave me a real sense of his loss, a very raw sense of the intangible notion of culture. When we think about the cultural landscape, we need to understand that it’s not just about an artefact that may or may not be recorded on ACHRIS, it’s about the stories and history that goes with it.

What emerged from the conversations with those of us who have been implementing Joint Management is that this outcome needs to acknowledge that Gunaikurnai ways of caring for Country and ‘western’ ways of managing natural resources are not static bodies of knowledge. They evolve. Our work is to develop and bring together the best of those two ways to sustainably manage our cultural landscapes. As one PV member put it:

“ There’s an assumption that we know how to manage Country, when it’s more about building capacity and discovering how to manage Country together. Traditional practices may need to be reinvigorated then applied in a contemporary setting – how do we understand what that looks like today? PV comes at this from a statutory perspective, Gunaikurnai people will come to it differently. What does it look like when they come together?

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

An important milestone will be to implement the Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers) Camping and Access Strategy and replicate it across other Joint Managed areas. Within government partners, we will adapt existing strategies such as the DEECA Regional Forest Agreements or the PV Land Management Strategy to align with the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscape Strategy, to ensure it is adopted and implemented. Each of us will also reflect, through a survey or during the annual workshop, on what we have learned over the past year on how to sustainably manage cultural landscapes.

Joint Management partners regularly meet on Country to discuss Cultural Interpretations and other important issues.



— Outcome 6 —

Partners ensure
fit-for-purpose
funding
to sustainably
manage cultural
landscapes

Securing sustainable, ongoing funding remains a high priority for the successful implementation of the Joint Management plan.

Several respondents to the 2022 survey highlighted the need for “realistic funding that is ongoing and untied to actually implement the plan”, with an emphasis on building capacity and capability for Joint Management.

We achieved a significant milestone with the funding secured as part of the early outcomes of the RSA renegotiations earlier this year. As one DEECA member shared:

“ For the first time we are providing funding on an ongoing multi-year basis for both GLaWAC and GKTOLMB for the implementation of the Joint Management Plan...we are trying to initiate degrees of self-determination as much as we can, for example, by shifting from funding agreements being about outcomes achieved rather than activities performed.

However, it is simplistic to think that funding is only required for the Gunaikurnai partners GLaWAC and GKTOLMB. We are on this intergenerational journey together, and government partners – DEECA and PV – must also continue to receive adequate budget allocations to implement Joint Management. Not allocating sufficient ongoing budgets to government partners to implement Joint Management risks putting pressure on GLaWAC to spend their funding on operational issues that should be the responsibility of the delegated land manager, as one GKTOLMB member reflected:

“ If we’re to see innovation and a shared ability to lead change, then it involves the resources of both Gunaikurnai and Government...The RSA allocation is to give Gunaikurnai more discretion and to

pursue things that are important for us... There is a state responsibility that remains in Joint Management. It is unrealistic that Gunaikurnai provide those resources.

This imbalance in budget allocations also has real operational consequences, as this PV member shared:

“ One of the challenges is that the balance is uneven. In a Joint Managed park, GLaWAC are paying their staff, and PV are paying GLaWAC to do work on the park. We are the holders of the budget. For example, for roadworks in one of the parks, through the first right of refusal process, the GLaWAC NRM crew are doing the work in partnership with Cranes [Civil and Surfacing]. GLaWAC want 10km of road in the park, but we only have money for 2km...It’s good that more funding is being provided for GLaWAC, but we are balancing an increasingly limited budget for management of those parks. This creates issues for how we can actually support them.

While we as Joint Management partners can propose and recommend where funding needs to sit, we note that the decisional power ultimately sits with the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

We will monitor the amount of funding across all partners that is allocated to, and used for, Joint Management, against the budget we have defined to meet our Joint Management objectives. We will also track the nature of the funding, the visibility of future funding, and the progress of ongoing negotiations with the broader Victorian government.



The Knob Reserve – Brayakaulung Country

The Knob was traditionally a common ground for the five clans of the Gunaikurnai.

Aboriginal people would travel for days to join great meetings where they would feast, share information, trade goods and practice corroborees and other cultural ceremonies. Today, returning right fire to this country is just one of the ways GLaWAC manages the reserve to protect the significant cultural heritage at the site.

Partners transform government systems to promote Gunaikurnai self-governance

This outcome recognises the progress that has been made in government mindsets over the past five years, towards reconciliation and Treaty for Aboriginal Victorians. It is because of that progress that we are able now to push the ambition of previous outcomes from supporting, to actively promoting, Gunaikurnai self-governance.

It is progress, even if it is frustratingly slow, as expressed by this Gunaikurnai Elder:

“Especially around RSA [renegotiations], they give you this, then they take something else. We’re ready to roll, but they’re not progressing it enough even with the changes within government... You always find that barrier. They give you this, BUT...There’s always a but.

DEECA’s Pupangarli Marnmarnepu Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy, published in 2020, reflects this understanding of how slow system transformation can be, when it speaks of needing “to ‘rewire’ the systems and processes...that create barriers to the self-determination of Aboriginal Victorians”. We are all aware of the need, as one respondent to the 2022 survey put it, “to ensure consistency between what senior leaders are committing to and what actually happens between partners on the ground”. One member from DEECA commented:

“We haven’t been able to transition decision-making authority to the Gunaikurnai, there is still a reluctance from us to let go and allow Traditional Owners more decision-making capacity. From that a lot of other things flow – resourcing, capability-building, economic opportunities. We haven’t been able to give them that seat at the table. There are people still trying to hang on to decision-making authority, there are still trust issues. There is lots of good intent, but I’m not sure we have the governance structures set

up to allow true Joint Management to exist, I’m not sure we communicate well enough across all of the agency, from where on-the-ground decisions are being made to the strategic space.

A member from PV shared a similar reflection on their own organisation:

“At the grassroots level it’s broadly ok, there are always pockets of people who don’t get it, but we can deal with that through natural attrition! At the executive level, there are broadly the best intentions. But there’s a bit in the middle that we haven’t got right... The central delivery arm – capital infrastructure and the corporate functions based in Melbourne – they don’t get Joint Management. Some people try. Some people don’t.

This was echoed by a member from GLaWAC:

“The biggest challenge within PV is those who are disconnected from the space and land that they are working on...they don’t understand that GLaWAC are the decision-makers in this space...PV needs to bring staff along for the journey...and management needs to have the courage to let people go if they are racist and refuse to change.

The current review of the 2019 Partnership Agreement between GLaWAC and PV was mentioned by members from both organisations as an important tool to drive systemic and cultural change within PV.

Cultural Heritage research guided by community members helps identify and protect places of cultural significance.



— Outcome 8 —

Partners grow Gunaikurnai capacity for managing land and water on Country

One PV member reflected:

“ *The partnership agreement review is going to be really, really important. One of our flaws from last time is that we didn't socialise and embed it in how we do business...This is what we need to do to make Joint Management and the relationship with GLaWAC real for everyone in the organisation...each of us needs to understand how it works on the ground.* ”

Ensuring that the change is systemic and embedded at a structural level within government partner organisations is critical for its resilience, especially given high staff turnover, as shared by another PV member:

“ *When I think about relationships with other Traditional Owner groups across Victoria, our relationship with GLaWAC is a real success story. It's worth celebrating. There's a real strength to it. But it's based on lots of individual relationships. It's strong, but it's not resilient.* ”

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

We will complete the update of the Partnership Agreement between GLaWAC and PV and track the extent to which it is actively guiding the relationship at all levels in both organisations. We will also refresh key government partner self-determination strategies to ensure they are aligned with our Joint Management approach, and track progress of their implementation. These include DEECA's Pupangarli Marnmarnepu Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy and PV's Managing Country Together Framework. We will hear from each other at least once a year, through a survey or during the annual workshop, on the extent to which government has promoted Gunaikurnai self-governance over the past year in Joint Management activities.

There are two results from the 2022 survey that intersect with this outcome: around 75% of respondents believed that Joint Management partners are supporting the development of Gunaikurnai leaders, and over 90% believed that Joint Management partners are learning together and getting better at what they do.

What we heard through the conversations in this review confirmed the progress that has been made towards this outcome. All partners celebrate the significant growth in GLaWAC as an organisation over the past five years. As one DEECA member remarked:

“ Since that low point of being in administration with ORIC in 2017, the capability and capacity of GLaWAC has come forward in leaps and bounds in terms of its maturity, the ability to articulate requirements, and the ability to tap into different levels of governments.

We also celebrate individual examples of growth, as shared by this PV member:

“ I had the opportunity to directly manage Gunaikurnai trainees... to see them become more confident in PV skills while using their cultural skills as well was fantastic... I'm not taking credit for that, but I saw real change, these guys becoming confident enough to make decisions without feeling the need to come back to me.

Several interviewees recognised, however, that with GLaWAC expanding its scope and people asking more of them, there is a need for GLaWAC to grow in a way that may require important structural changes. One GKTOLMB member shared:

“ Structurally, GLaWAC are not as well positioned as they could or should be to be an equitable partner in Joint Management... They lack some horsepower in middle to senior management... Managing Country

is not just about rangers, you need other capabilities and responsibilities and contributions that support what rangers do on a daily basis.

This was echoed by some GLaWAC staff sharing that they feel stretched beyond capacity:

“ At the moment so much happens at GLaWAC... We need to work out in Joint Management who's doing what... Sometimes it feels like the rangers have to pick up the pieces.

“ All the stuff you are expected to do, it takes a toll on you.

There was a practical idea offered by one PV member for building capacity in these support role:

“ Being a ranger is not for everyone – that's an opportunity! Let's create proper traineeship programs for admin and business to build that skill level from the ground up. It would be so easy to do here.

Several staff at PV also reflected on what else they need to do differently to better support the development of Gunaikurnai colleagues:

“ There's been some frustration [from the PV team] that time-critical services in parks were not getting done to the standard that visitors and we expect. We assumed that the Gunaikurnai would look after those critical services – I'm not sure we ever had a conversation or agreement that that would take

place. We didn't understand enough the disparity in these capabilities, and we didn't understand enough the journey that the Gunaikurnai are on. The expectation didn't match reality.

“ There needs to be a real willingness from our teams to understand the role we need to play to provide support and foster capacity for Gunaikurnai people involved in Joint Management. We need to be proactively creating the right kind of opportunities and having respectful conversations, and this needs to happen right down to the works programming and planning level. There needs to be a real effort to make time and space in our incredibly busy schedules to spend time together on Country, to reinforce that mutual understanding and learning.

The importance of spending time together and connecting human to human to deepen two-way understanding and learning was shared by several people interviewed across all partners, like this PV member:

“ You see this in the working bees in parks between PV and Gunaikurnai: laughing together, a relaxed feeling. Gunaikurnai rangers want to learn how to do emails, PV staff are willing to sit side-by-side with them, without embarrassment. These small things are really important.

Secondments in both directions are seen as very effective. Some spoke of going one step further. One PV member wondered:

“ Is there another way of bringing the workforce together, being in the same space together, sharing the authorising environment together?

Or as one GKTOLMB member put it:

“ The PV and Gunaikurnai ranger teams often seem to be two parallel universes. Can we try to get the joint into Joint Management, in a way that is more robust?

This was echoed by a GLaWAC member:

“ We need to think about how we can better utilise the workforces. We've tried a couple of times to put Gunaikurnai and PV rangers together to do stuff. It works a bit but takes a lot of driving from leaders. When there are things that we replicate, we can share and do stuff together. What's the need, what do we actually need to do? You don't need to check what colour shirt you've got on. Instead, we should be asking: what's the best outcome for Country?

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

One simple way is to track the number of Gunaikurnai people working in Joint Management across all partners from year to year. But we also want to track how we are supporting Gunaikurnai people to grow. We will agree on and implement new entry-level pathways for Gunaikurnai people across all the different functions that are needed in Joint Management, including administration and business skills. We will create informal and formal opportunities for all Gunaikurnai staff to grow into project and people management roles. This might include things like rotating project management roles or rotating meeting chairs, regular mentoring, or formal leadership development training. And we will think outside the box, working within current legislative and funding constraints, to optimise the combined existing workforce across all partners. We will also hear from each other at least once a year, through a survey or during the annual workshop, on the extent to which Gunaikurnai capacity to manage land and water on Country has improved.

An aerial photograph of a coastline. The top half shows a sandy beach with patches of dark green coastal vegetation. The bottom half shows the ocean with white-capped waves breaking onto the shore. The water transitions from a deep blue to a lighter turquoise near the beach.

***“We’re proud to be
working on Country,***

***working with family,
every day.”***

Gunaikurnai ranger

Partners lead legislative changes enabling Gunaikurnai people to make decisions on Country

We heard several times through this review that current legislation poses a significant barrier to Gunaikurnai people making decisions on Country. As one PV member shared:

“*Legislation is the pain point... How can you have a true partnership when one side has all the power and all the authority and the other side has nothing, really.*”

One barrier that was often cited was the National Parks Act 1975, which governs PV’s management of the parks. PV is the delegated land manager for all the Joint Managed areas except for the Knob Reserve, which is managed by the Knob Recreation Reserve Management Committee Inc. One Knob Reserve Committee member reflected on why shared decision-making seemed to be more possible for the Knob Reserve compared to the other Joint Managed areas:

“*You can only lead if your governance sets you up to lead. The [Knob Reserve] Committee has a unique model that has allowed that. Through the RSA renegotiations, Gunaikurnai have asked for something similar for the other parks and reserves, as there hasn’t been enough behavioural change around transfer of power and control and decision-making and being a truly joint partnership. The challenge is in the legislation that sits around PV. All the land that PV currently manages sits on their land register, it would need to come off their land register. We need to get PV on board.*”

There are changes underway. The reform of Victoria’s Crown Land legislation was launched in 2017 to, among other things, “recognise, enable, and support self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians”. Consultations were concluded in 2021, and

the Victorian government is on track to bring the new Public Land Act into force within the next five years. The National Parks Act 1975 will also be updated accordingly. Although these changes might not go as far as the interviewee above would hope for, one DEECA member explained just how significant they are:

“*The reform of the Crown Land Act will provide more opportunity for Traditional Owners to be involved in direct or sole management... They will be fully empowered to manage land in their own right when they have the capacity and capability to do so... We want to have the systems and legislation in place on our side for when the Gunaikurnai are ready to move further in that direction.*”

Given how long legislation can take to change, however, we mustn’t fall into the trap of using it as an excuse to not drive change on the ground, as cautioned by this GKTOLMB member:

“*Let’s move from respecting and appreciating Gunaikurnai culture over here, then you have your meeting, to having Gunaikurnai culture at the top and informing everything we do. We need to stop seeing legislation and funding as a barrier and start interpreting it with the right mindset, a mindset of ‘let’s make this work’.*”



This was echoed by a PV member:

“ Let’s think about how we can do this within current boundaries...There are things you can do with the right intent. We can set up good governance without changing the legislation.

Gunaikurnai Rangers are bringing traditional knowledge and methods back to the way Country is managed.

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

We will monitor the ongoing reform of Victorian Crown Land legislation and the National Parks Act, contributing proactively whenever we think it is needed. While those changes are being made, we will also consider what organisational policies and other ways of working can be changed, especially within government partners, to enable Gunaikurnai people to make decisions on Country. This includes finding practical ways, within existing legislative constraints, for Gunaikurnai rangers to do what they need to do to protect Country in the moment, without having to first undergo a lengthy approval process by the end of which irreparable damage to the cultural landscape may have been done.

— Outcome 10 —

Gunaikurnai people are decision-makers for managing land and water on Country

We heard from Community that what matters most is having a say in what happens on Country. Gunaikurnai leading the care of their country every day is self-determination in the context of Joint Management.

“ Joint Management is about getting a say in joint wealth – it’s gotta be proper joint.

“ It’s our land, we need to have a really big say in it, not just manage it. We’ve had so many Elders who have passed, who set this up. This is where we’re going for the future.

“ The biggest thing is having a say about what happens. I don’t want to be told I should go do stuff. I know what I want to do.

The Knob Reserve Committee of Management – made up of representatives from GLaWAC, DEECA, and GKTOLMB – is our leading practice for shared decision-making, even if it’s not perfect, as one GLaWAC member commented:

“ The pony club is still illegally out there. We’re in the process of getting authority, but it takes a very long time. Thousands and thousands of years of heritage being trampled into the ground for kids to ride ponies.

Committee members explained the positive changes in governance over the past few years, with roles such as the chair and secretariat initially sitting with DEECA, to today where they are both held by GLaWAC. Flexibility in the governance model – for example, appointing GLaWAC as a corporate member rather than appointing fixed individual members – enables leadership opportunities, as one committee member shared:

“ The committee provides lots of opportunity for our young people to attend and get involved. It’s a place to test and experiment! They can step into leadership, governance, working with partners, negotiating what we want to do on our land. Rangers can get experience here to evolve into management roles, paving the way for younger generations...It might be uncomfortable for them but if they’re not here, how will they know if they can contribute?



Working with community on Country protects places of cultural significance and improves our parks for all visitors.

Replicating this model today for other Joint Managed areas is complicated, though. Beyond the legislative barriers mentioned in the previous section, there is the question of GLaWAC’s current capacity to take on full responsibility and liability in each of the parks and reserves. Instead of seeing this as a binary either-or, we could move towards an intermediate model, tailored towards the particularities of each park or reserve, as suggested by this PV member:

“ Maybe we could do a pilot in the next two years, perhaps for Corringale. Perhaps Gunaikurnai become the primary managers for Corringale, but with a service-level agreement for PV to manage the commercial aspects, so that Gunaikurnai can access resources that we can’t hand over in cash.

Another PV member detailed what that might look like at an operational level:

“ We need to work with GLaWAC to get to shared positions on objectives for any given park. These are small units, so we can manage it. Those bits that are important to GLaWAC, we can share the planning, split the accountabilities. This is where we work together, this is how we work together, right down to how are we going to manage these tracks. GLaWAC might not want to do it all, but they want to say how it’s done. We could have a situation where PV is effectively the contractor.

More broadly, we can ensure that Gunaikurnai people as represented by GLaWAC and GKTOLMB are having a say through improving the way we implement governance structures across all Joint Management partners, recognising the limited capacity for attending multiple meetings. As one DEECA member shared:

“ With RSA renegotiations going on, there are too many meetings with the same people, people stop showing up... The operations group has good intent,

but it needs to get back on track, so that it can effectively feed into the Karobran Partnership Committee which is executive-level...There’s a lot of overlap between Joint Management and RSA – perhaps we can use the same meetings to cover both?

Several government partners, like this PV member, expressed their hopes that changes in the broader context towards justice for Aboriginal Victorians would spark an acceleration of the deeper cultural change:

“ A big part of it is changing the way people think. This happens slowly. With Treaty, Yoorrook, I hope the speed of change will increase. We can embed these things on the horizon in our Joint Management narrative to help our people become early adopters of this way of thinking.

How we start to track our progress towards this outcome

We want to know that our work leads to tangible changes in who is in the decision making and how this impacts Country. We will look at how many Gunaikurnai people are in senior leadership roles across all Joint Management organisations. We will also monitor the co-governance arrangements in each Joint Managed area. We know that type of co-governance is different for each park and may change over time. We will take the lessons of co-governance at The Knob Reserve, to extend the model, starting with the Corringale Foreshore Reserve. We will regularly ask Gunaikurnai people working in Joint Management and the broader Gunaikurnai community if they feel they have had a say in managing land and water on Country over the past year.

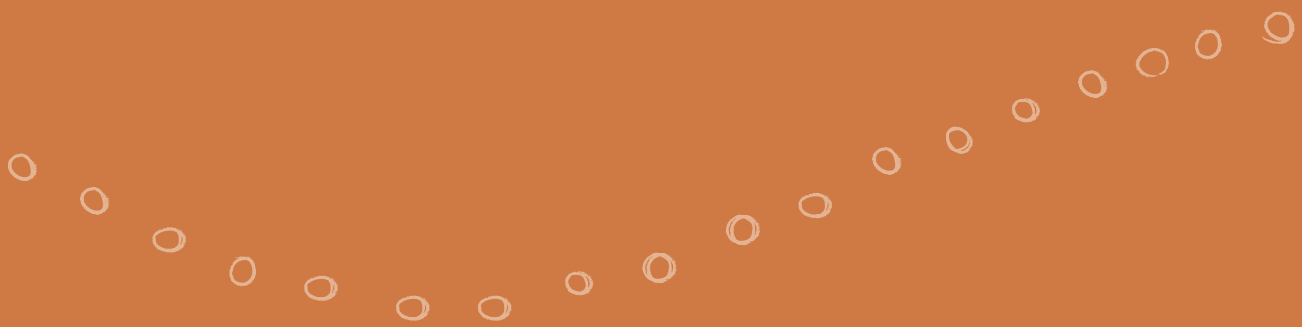


JAN HARRISON



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Appendix 1:

What we mean by the words we use

Acronyms and abbreviations

ACHRIS: Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Register and Information System

DEECA: Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action

GLaWAC: Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation

GKTOLMB: Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board

KRRMC: Knob Recreation Reserve Management Committee Inc – the delegated land manager for the Knob Recreation Reserve, comprising members from GLaWAC, GKTOLMB, and DEECA

NRM: Natural Resource Management – used here to refer to the GLaWAC NRM crew, who deliver fee-for-service on-ground works including the maintenance of assets, infrastructure and environmental projects

ORIC: Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations

PV: Parks Victoria

RSA: Recognition and Settlement Agreement – this is an agreement between the State and Traditional Owners under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010, a law that provides a framework for the recognition of Traditional Owner rights and the settlement of native title claims in Victoria.

Words around Joint Management

Country: Country for Gunaikurnai people encompasses land, water, sky, sea, and all life.

Cultural landscape: This is a term used by UNESCO to acknowledge the interdependence between humans and the rest of nature. We use it here to bridge the ‘western’ view of Natural Resource Management and the Gunaikurnai view of Caring for Country.

Joint Management: This is a legal partnership between Traditional Owners and the State in the management of public land.

Joint Management partners: These are GKTOLMB, GLaWAC, KRRMC, PV, and DEECA. By Gunaikurnai partners we mean GLaWAC and GKTOLMB. By government partners we mean PV and DEECA.

Karobran Partnership Committee: Karobran means Together. This committee acts as the steering group for Joint Management, comprising representatives from each of the Joint Management partners.

Other words we use

Theory of change: We can think of the theory of change as our current ‘belief’ for how our activities lead to our intended impact, via a simplified chain of cause and effect (simplified because real change rarely follows a linear path).

Strategy: The strategy is the translation of that belief (the theory of change) to a specific context over a given period, with finite resources and capabilities.

Outcomes: Outcomes are the changes (in this case, for People, Culture, and Country) that we intend to achieve through implementing our strategy.

Appendix 2: A reminder of the first five-year strategic plan

The first five-year strategic plan that was published in the 2018 Joint Management Plan defined 30 activities that sit under seven strategic initiatives, contributing towards 21 outcomes that sit under four strategic goals.

The figures in this section are replicated from that strategic plan.

The original theory of change from five years ago

The 2018 Joint Management Plan included several pictures that we called our 'theory of change'. An excerpt is shown in Figure 1 below. It reflected the commitment between Gunaikurnai people and the Victorian government to work together to manage the designated Joint Management areas on Gunaikurnai Country over the following 25 years. It identified the most important changes, or outcomes, that partners wanted to see Joint Management achieve for People, Culture, and Country, through Working Together. It also recognised that the Plan and the theory of change itself would evolve over time, incorporating knowledge gained through implementing the Plan, as well as adapting to changes in the broader context.

Within the Joint Management Plan, a strategic plan containing seven initiatives, each with several activities, was created to achieve the 21 outcomes identified for the first five years of the theory of change, which in turn would lead to the overall five-year goals for each of the four themes. We intended to monitor our progress through two methods: tracking the activities that we said we would do, and tracking indicators we developed for each of those 21 outcomes.

We have done much of what we said we would do, despite the devastating impact of the 2019-2020 bushfires and then the pandemic. As you can read in more detail in Appendix 3, there are three strategic initiatives from that plan that we progressed particularly well: protecting and presenting Gunaikurnai culture in Joint Managed parks; integrating Gunaikurnai knowledge and practices into an innovative, sustainable land management approach; and improving governance, leadership and management across Joint Management partners.

We have also made significant progress towards our five-year goals for People, Culture, Country, and Working Together. However, our plan of tracking that progress from year to year through the indicators for the 21 outcomes turned out to be trickier than we had imagined. We did our best to carry this out in the first year. But there were too many outcomes and too many indicators. The level of detail and the effort required from all of us to do this seemed too much and not quite right for what we were looking to achieve. Instead, after that first year, we tried to keep track of our progress through open and

honest yarning with each other at our annual reflection workshops. We experimented with very simple report cards as a way to show how we were progressing towards each of the goals, however these seemed to oversimplify our achievements and challenges. In 2022, we ran an anonymous survey ahead of the end-of-year workshop to make sure that we were hearing some of the quieter voices among us. We also summarised our annual progress for the first time in a short document that captured the diversity and nuance of what we had collectively heard during that workshop (see Appendix 3 for more detail). This seemed to be just right for what we had intended in tracking our progress of the Joint Management Plan: learning from what has and hasn't worked well, so that we can keep improving in the future.

Other important things have happened over the past five years on Gunaikurnai Country and more broadly. The Yoorrook Justice Commission started its work. Legislation advancing Treaty was enacted by the Victorian parliament. The federal government committed to implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The Victorian government started handing back water to the Gunaikurnai community. A Sea Country Indigenous Protection Area, together with other Traditional Owners, is being established with the federal government. The 2010 Recognition and Settlement Agreement that began the journey of Gunaikurnai self-determination has been re-opened for negotiation, with some important early outcomes. One is an increase in funding for both GLaWAC and GKTOLMB. Another is the transfer of four new areas to Joint Management from July 2023.

All these changes mean that we need a new picture to help us write the next five-year chapter of our story in Joint Management.

Note that the full version of the 2018 Joint Management Plan is available on GLaWAC's publications website www.gunaikurnai.org/our-news/publications.

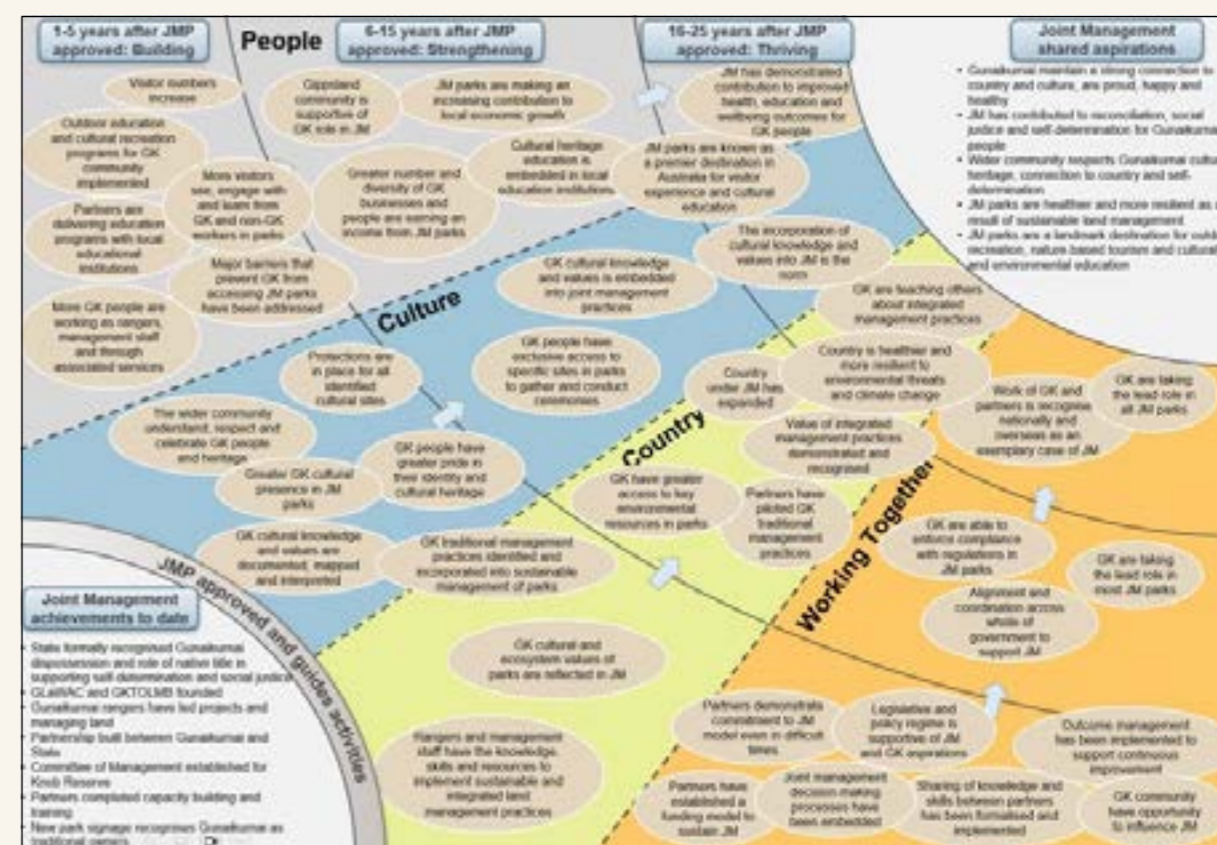
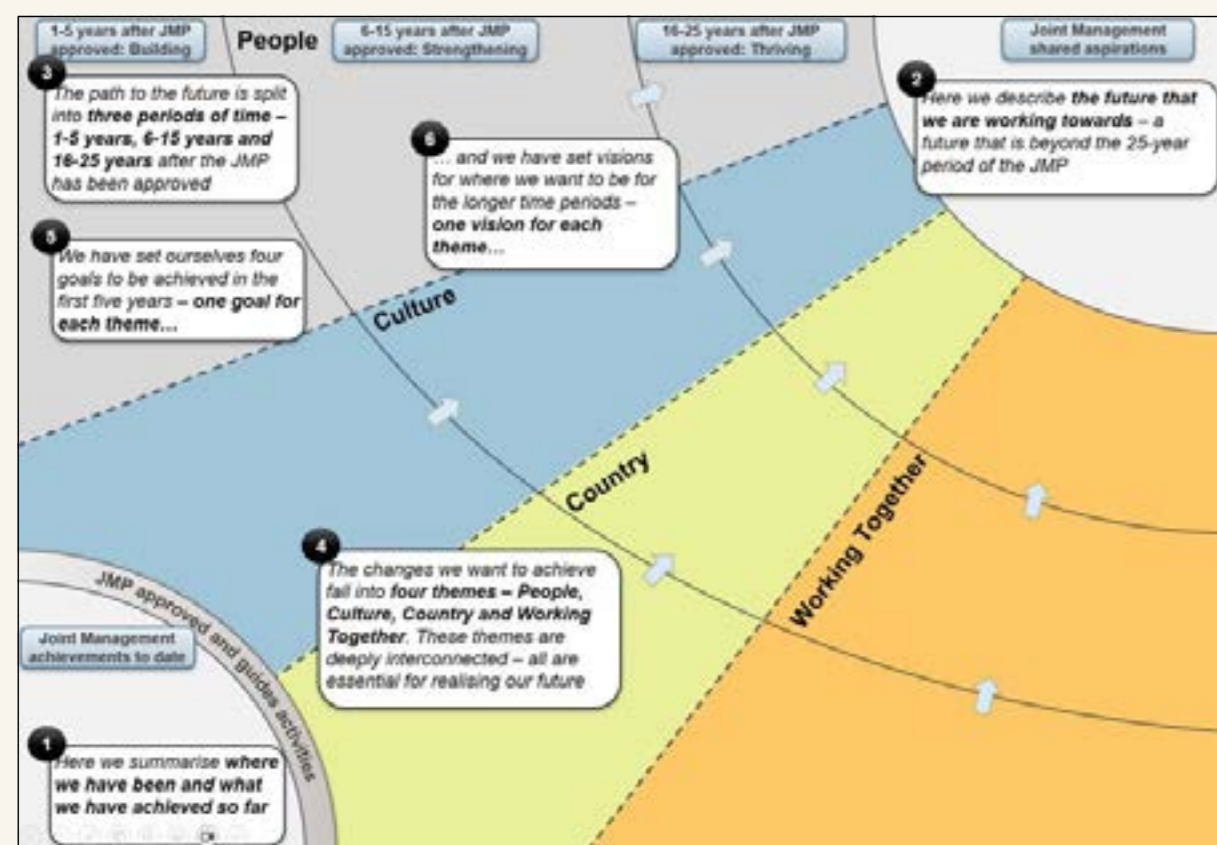
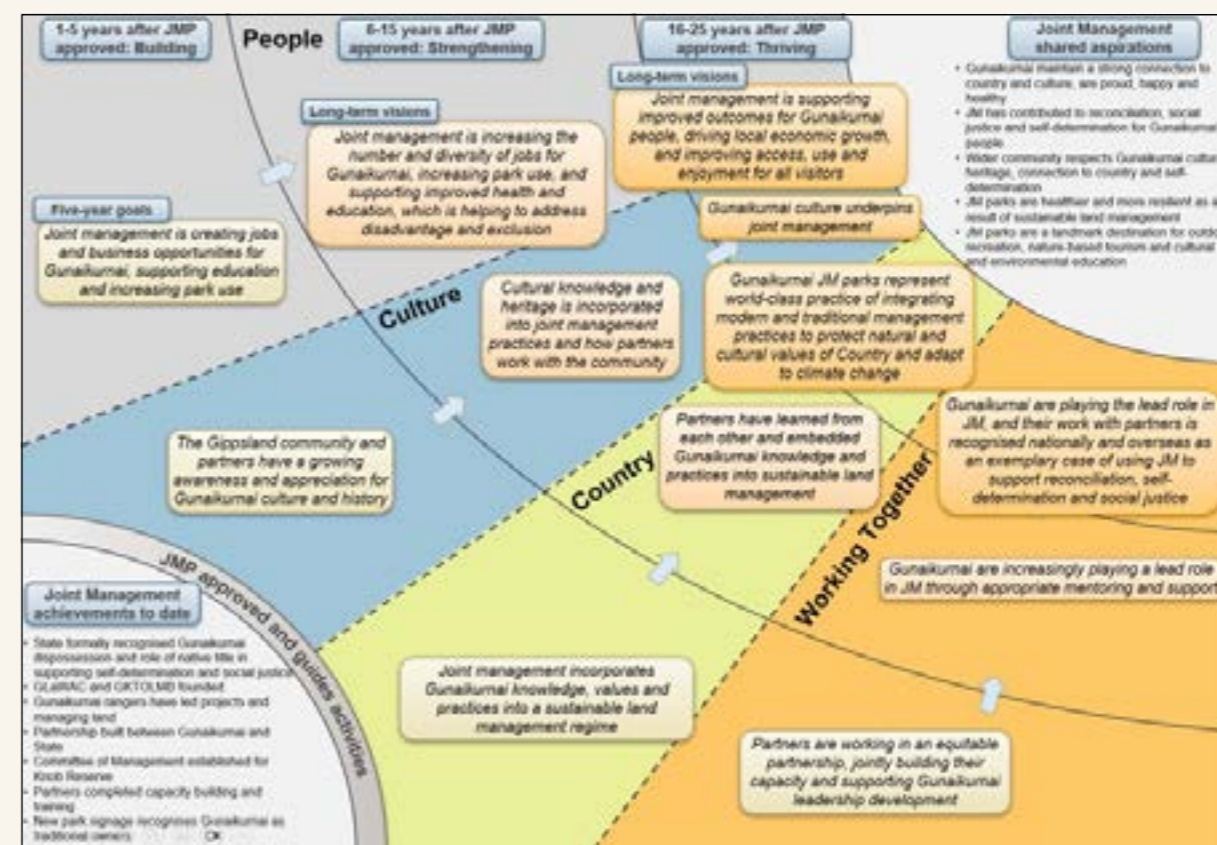
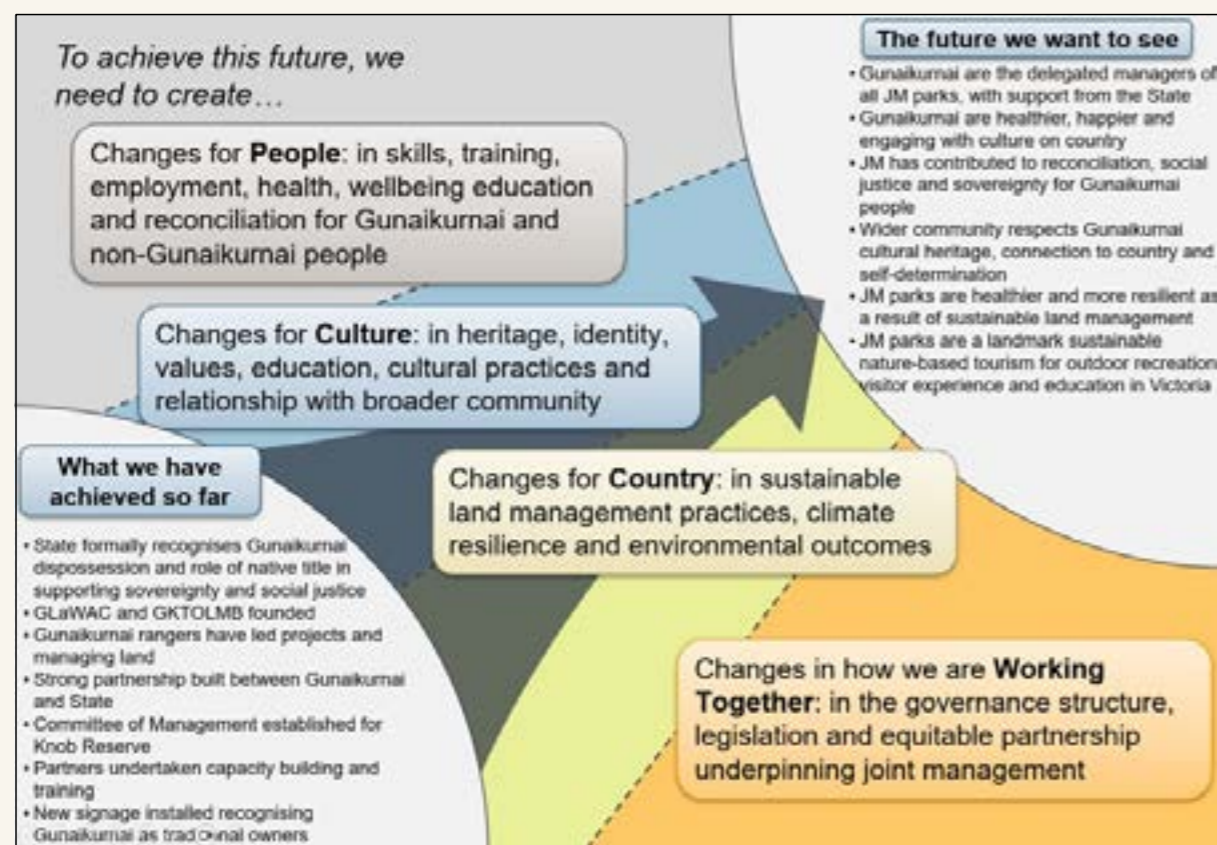
Figure 3: The seven strategic initiatives to achieve the five-year goals



Figure 4: The 30 activities across the strategic initiatives

Strategic initiatives	Activities
PEOPLE: Joint management is creating jobs and business opportunities, supporting education and increasing park use.	
1 Create employment and economic sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Develop and implement an economic development/business strategy for Gunaikurnai commercial operations. b Build business management capability in GLaWAC. c Establish policies to prioritise Gunaikurnai suppliers and contractors in procurement and tenders. d Increase the number of Gunaikurnai rangers and management staff. e Implement ranger-led education and visitor experience activities in JM parks. f Implement an education program with Gunaikurnai and non-Gunaikurnai youth about Gunaikurnai culture and joint management.
2 Increase access to and use of JM parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Support Gunaikurnai to overcome barriers to access JM parks. b Provide facilities for Gunaikurnai people to visit and stay on JM parks.
3 Invest in tourism and visitor experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Develop and implement a tourism and marketing strategy. b Develop a tourism training and employment program in partnership with industry and tour operators. c Build partnerships with Victorian Government agencies and local tourism bodies. d Collect data on visitor numbers, feedback and local spending.
CULTURE: The Gippsland community and partners have a growing awareness and appreciation for Gunaikurnai culture and history.	
4 Protect and present Gunaikurnai culture in JM parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Capture Gunaikurnai cultural knowledge, heritage, stories, language and values in JM parks. b Develop and implement a cultural heritage interpretation strategy for JM parks. c Protect cultural sites and important cultural landscapes from damage. d Implement measures to comply with legislative requirements relating to cultural heritage.
COUNTRY: Joint management incorporates Gunaikurnai knowledge, values and practices into a sustainable land management regime.	
5 Integrate Gunaikurnai knowledge and practices into an innovative, sustainable land management approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Strengthen partnerships to manage land and water and improve resilience to climate change. b Deliver a capacity-building and knowledge exchange program for Gunaikurnai, DELWP and Parks Victoria rangers and other staff. c Support Gunaikurnai to participate in relevant land management and cultural heritage courses. d Re-establish Gunaikurnai fire management knowledge and practices in JM parks.
WORKING TOGETHER: Partners are working in an equitable partnership, jointly building their capacity and supporting Gunaikurnai leadership development.	
6 Resolve key regulatory agreements and policy matters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Improve legislative and policy environment for JM and Gunaikurnai aspirations. b Identify and pursue ongoing protection declarations for significant Gunaikurnai places within JM parks. c Develop and implement a policy that protects Gunaikurnai cultural and intellectual property.
7 Improve governance, leadership and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a Develop and implement a funding model to sustain joint management. b Establish formalised processes for Gunaikurnai and the Victorian Government to share knowledge and jointly build capacity. c Build Gunaikurnai leadership capacity under joint management. d Establish an online information network for joint management. e Develop and implement a culturally appropriate and inclusive model for Gunaikurnai community to provide input into joint management decision-making. f Engage with park users, neighbours and other stakeholders of JM parks. g Implement outcome management and continuous improvement process.

Figure 5: The theory of change in four pictures



Appendix 3: What we saw in documents

Most activities were implemented as planned

The status of planned activities across the seven strategic initiatives (as listed in Figure 4) was mainly based on analysing the GKTOLMB annual works reporting for 2019-2020, 2020-2021, and 2021-2022.

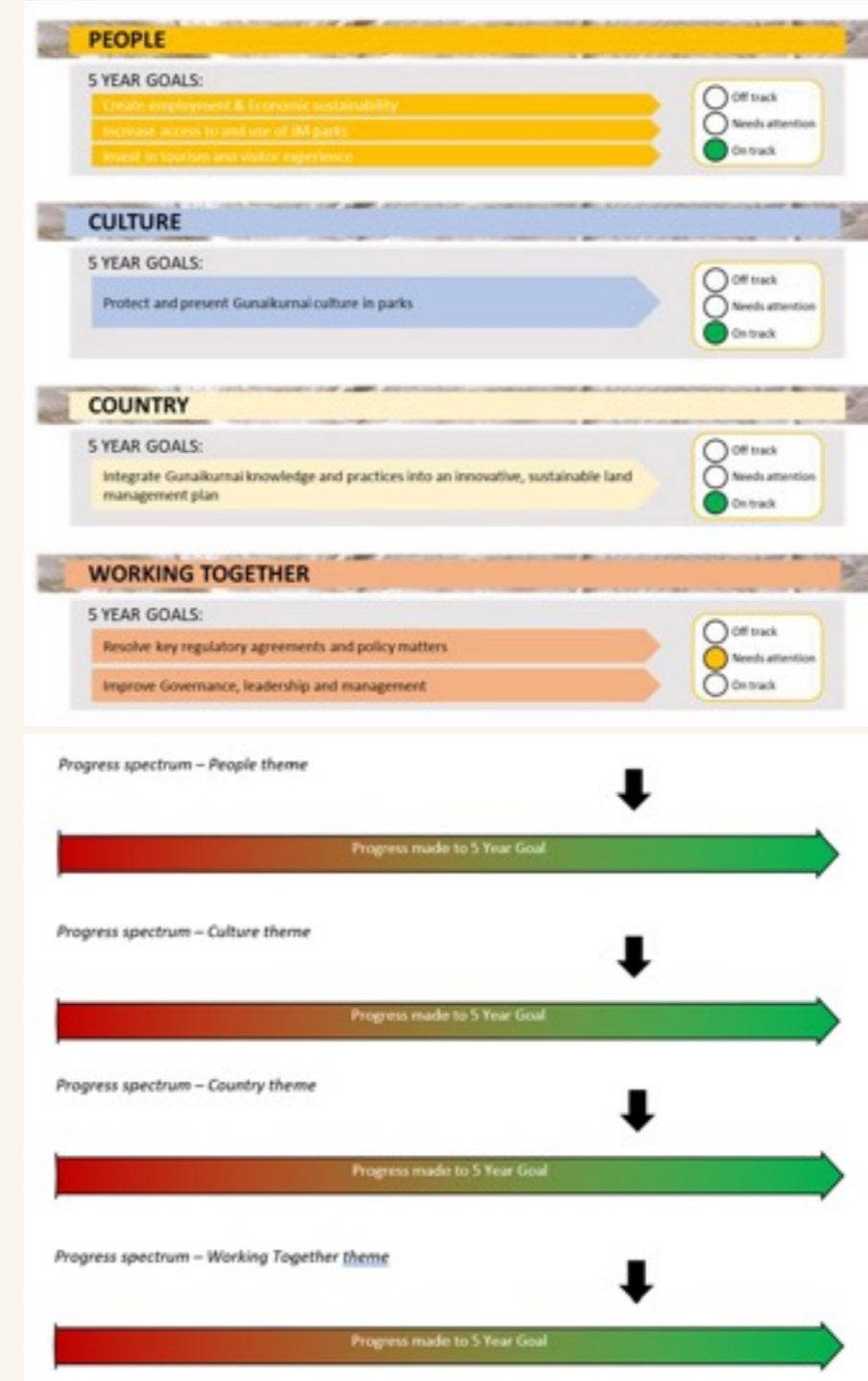
Figure 6: Summary of the implementation status of planned activities



Significant progress is being made towards each of the five-year changes

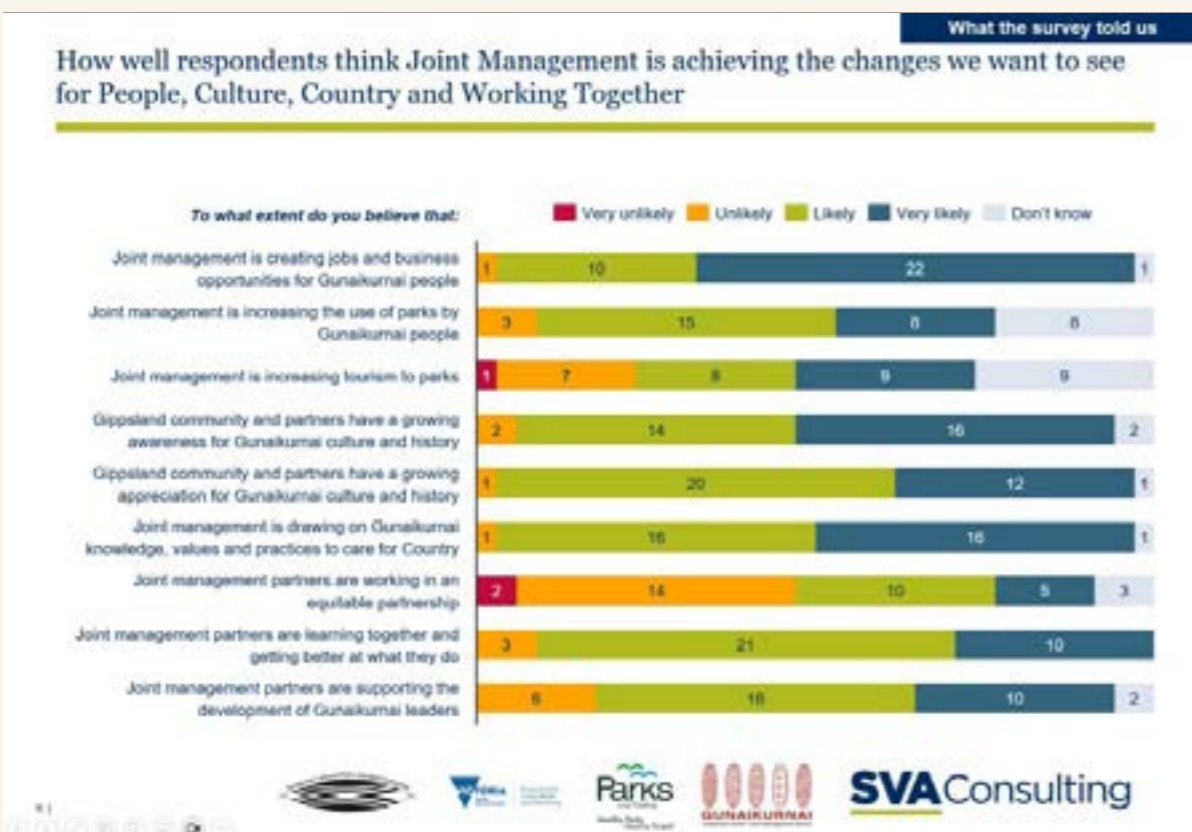
The 2018-2019 draft report card showed that progress towards the People, Culture, and Country goals was on track, but that the Working Together goal needed attention. The 2020-2021 draft report card showed that progress towards all four goals were on track, despite the disruptions caused by the 2020 bushfires and subsequently the Covid pandemic.

Figure 7: The 2018-2019 (left) and 2020-2021 (right) draft report cards



The end-of-2022 survey completed by 34 people across the JM partners reflected positive responses to progress on all four goals, except for the statement “Joint management partners are working in an equitable partnership”, which is part of the Working Together goal.

Figure 8: Results from the end-of-2022 survey on progress towards the five-year goals, as presented at the 2022 annual reflection workshop



Short- and longer-term changes need to evolve

The aspirations expressed recently by partners reflect the progress that has been made more broadly on Gunaikurnai Country and in Victorian and Australian communities.

The GKTOLMB's draft 2021-2026 strategy affirms the vision of Gunaikurnai people leading the care of their Country every day. It places Joint Management in context, stating in its introduction:

“*Joint Management is more than managing the 10 parcels of land within the Recognition and Settlement Agreement. It is about Gunaikurnai Self-Determination.*”

In the end-of-2022 survey, partners also expressed broader ambitions for Joint Management: the need to better align with GLaWAC's Whole of Country plan (which is currently under revision), and defining a roadmap beyond Joint Management towards self-determination.

Figure 9: Results from the end-of-2022 survey on what would make joint management better, as presented at the 2022 annual reflection workshop



How we track our progress needs to evolve

A comprehensive data collection effort was conducted in 2018-2019 for the indicators for each of the 21 outcomes, and was not repeated. Feedback from this process was that there were too many indicators, some were unclear, and too much effort was required to gather the data.

The 2018-2019 and 2020-2021 report cards (see Figure 7) and the end-of-2022 survey (see Figure 8) all evaluate progress on Joint Management at the level of the four strategic goals. This seems to be the right level for partners to make sense of and be able to meaningfully reflect on their collective progress as a group, as demonstrated during the annual reflection workshops.

Part of this evolution in reporting likely reflects the increasing trust in the relationship and less need for 'bureaucratic' measures. However, as the responses from partners during the 2022 annual reflection workshop on 'what matters most for the 5-year review' demonstrate (see Figure 10), we need to find the right balance between: longer-term goals and shorter-term outcomes, quantitative and qualitative data, and what is easy to measure and what matters most.

Figure 10: Excerpt from the 2022 annual reflection workshop summary on what matters most for the 5-year review



Note that the full summary of the 2022 annual reflection workshop is available on GLaWAC’s Joint Management website www.gunaikurnai.org/our-country/joint-management.

Appendix 4: How our new storyline connects to the theory of change

The following four tables detail how each of the outcomes in the original theory of change (see Figure 1) were considered in developing the ten outcomes in the new storyline for the next five years of Joint Management (see Figure 2).

They are organised by the four themes of People, Culture, Country, and Working Together.

Table 1: Mapping from former People outcomes to new outcomes

Mapping from former People outcomes...	...to new outcomes
Visitor numbers increase	The intention behind this outcome is included in <i>Gunaikurnai people build wealth through new and old ways of managing Country</i>
Outdoor education and cultural recreation programs for	The intention behind this outcome is included in <i>Gunaikurnai people feel connected to their Gunaikurnai identity</i>
GK community implemented	The intention behind this outcome is included in <i>The wider community respects Gunaikurnai decisionmaking on Country</i>
Partners are delivering education programs with local schools	The intention behind this outcome is included in <i>The wider community respects Gunaikurnai decisionmaking on Country</i>
More visitors see, engage with and learn from GK and non-GK workers in parks	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people build wealth through new and old ways of managing Country</i> and <i>Partners grow Gunaikurnai capacity for managing land and water on Country</i>
More GK people are working as rangers, management staff and through associated services	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people have the freedom to access Country</i>
Major barriers that prevent GK from accessing JM parks have been addressed Gippsland community is supportive of GK role in JM	Included in <i>The wider community respects Gunaikurnai decision-making on Country</i>
Cultural heritage education is embedded in local education institutions	The intention behind this outcome is included in <i>The wider community respects Gunaikurnai decisionmaking on Country</i>
JM parks are making an increasing contribution to local economic growth	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people build wealth through new and old ways of managing Country</i>
Greater number and diversity of GK businesses and people are earning an income from JM parks	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people build wealth through new and old ways of managing Country</i>
JM parks are known as a premier destination in Australia for visitor experience and cultural education	This is not explicitly included in the updated version. It is considered as an outcome that is not a current priority to achieve the vision of Joint Management
JM has demonstrated contribution to improved health, education and wellbeing outcomes for GK people	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people build wealth through new and old ways of managing Country</i>

Table 2: Mapping from former Culture outcomes to new outcomes

Mapping from former Culture outcomes...	...to new outcomes
Greater GK cultural presence in JM parks	Included in <i>The wider community respects Gunaikurnai decision-making on Country</i>
Protections are in place for all identified cultural sites	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
The wider community understand, respect and celebrate GK people and heritage	Included in <i>The wider community respects Gunaikurnai decision-making on Country</i>
GK cultural knowledge, management practices and values are documented, mapped and interpreted	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
GK people have greater pride in their identity and cultural heritage	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people feel connected to their Gunaikurnai identity</i>
GK cultural knowledge and values is embedded into joint management practices	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
GK people have exclusive access to specific sites in parks to gather and conduct ceremonies	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people have the freedom to access Country</i>
The incorporation of cultural knowledge and values into JM is the norm	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>

Table 3: Mapping from former Country outcomes to new outcomes

Mapping from former Country outcomes...	...to new outcomes
GK traditional management practices identified and incorporated into sustainable management of parks	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
Rangers and management staff have the knowledge, skills and resources to implement sustainable and integrated land management practices	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i> and <i>Partners grow Gunaikurnai capacity for managing land and water on Country</i>
GK cultural and ecosystem values of parks are reflected	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
Value of integrated management practices demonstrated and recognised	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
Country under JM has expanded	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people are decision-makers for managing land and water on Country</i>
GK have greater access to key environmental resources in parks	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people have the freedom to access Country</i>
Partners have piloted GK traditional management practices	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
Country is healthier and more resilient to environmental threats and climate change	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
GK are teaching others about integrated management practices	Included in <i>Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>

Table 4: Mapping from former Working Together outcomes to new outcomes

Mapping from former Working Together outcomes...	...to new outcomes
Partners demonstrate commitment to JM model even in difficult times	This is not explicitly included in the updated version. It is considered as mature, given the difficult times experienced by JM partners over the past 5 years (bushfires and COVID to name just two)
Partners have established a funding model to sustain JM	Included in <i>Partners ensure fit-for-purpose funding to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
Decision-making processes have been embedded	Included in <i>Partners lead legislative changes enabling Gunaikurnai people to make decisions on Country and Partners transform government systems to promote Gunaikurnai self-governance</i>
Legislative and policy regime is supportive of JM and GK aspirations	Included in <i>Partners lead legislative changes enabling Gunaikurnai people to make decisions on Country and Partners transform government systems to promote Gunaikurnai self-governance</i>
Sharing of knowledge and skills between partners has been formalised and implemented	Included in <i>Partners grow Gunaikurnai capacity for managing land and water on Country and Partners develop and bring together Gunaikurnai and 'western' practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
Outcome management has been implemented to support continuous improvement	This is not explicitly included in the updated version. It is considered as mature, given the annual reflection workshops, this review, and is also tracked separately under the GKTOLMB strategic plan
GK community have opportunity to influence JM	Included implicitly in <i>Gunaikurnai people are decision-makers for managing land and water on Country and Partners grow Gunaikurnai capacity for managing land and water on Country</i>
GK are able to enforce compliance with regulations in JM parks	Included in <i>Partners grow Gunaikurnai capacity for managing land and water on Country</i>
Alignment and coordination across whole of government to support JM	Included in <i>Partners lead legislative changes enabling Gunaikurnai people to make decisions on Country, Partners transform government systems to promote Gunaikurnai self-governance, and Partners ensure fit-for-purpose funding to sustainably manage cultural landscapes</i>
GK are taking the lead role in most JM parks	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people are decision-makers for managing land and water on Country and Partners grow Gunaikurnai capacity for managing land and water on Country</i>
Work of GK and partners is recognised nationally and overseas as an exemplary case of JM	This is not explicitly included in the updated version. It is considered as an outcome that is not a current priority to achieve the vision of Joint Management.
GK are taking the lead role in all JM parks	Included in <i>Gunaikurnai people are decision-makers for managing land and water on Country and Partners grow Gunaikurnai capacity for managing land and water on Country</i>

Appendix 5: What we heard through conversations

The following contents captures and summarises what was heard through the consultations that were conducted with the six major stakeholder groups of Joint Management:

- Community
- Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB)
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)
- Knob Recreation Reserve Management Committee Inc (KRRMC)
- Parks Victoria (PV)
- Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)

Participants for the Joint Management partner consultations were thoughtfully selected by each of the Joint Management partners. Most Joint Management partners put forward a range of participants that would ensure the perspectives of multiple levels of their organisation would be represented in the review. Conversations with community members happened organically at the NAIDOC Community Day, with participants selected based on their interest in Joint Management and their willingness to be interviewed.

The following consultation summaries serve to expand on some of the perspectives that have been included in the main body of the report and highlight the main themes that came out of the conversations with the separate stakeholder groups. We have done our best to preserve the integrity of what was voiced in the conversations, while synthesising and rewording some perspectives in the interests of flow and clarity, as well as to respect the anonymity of participants. We recognise the diversity of opinions within each of the Joint Management partners and do not intend for individual perspectives to be interpreted as being universally accepted within each organisation or group.

Community

Consultations with community were conducted in person at the NAIDOC Community Day held on Knob Reserve, Stratford on 25 July 2023. The interviews were unstructured except for three guiding themes: awareness and understanding of Joint Management, reflections on Joint Management, and hopes for the future of Joint Management.

Awareness and understanding of Joint Management

The majority of community members interviewed were aware of Joint Management, having been involved themselves, had friends and family involved or heard about it through local newspapers and social media. Broadly, those that were aware of Joint Management had a good conceptual understanding of the partnership and its goal but as expected, some lacked an understanding of what people working in Joint Management do day to day. Those that were not aware of Joint Management were provided with snapshot of the approach and objectives of Joint Management and were encouraged to share their perspectives on the concept of Joint Management and their hopes for the future.

Reflections on Joint Management

Community members provided positive reflections on Joint Management, highlighting the value of the partnership in fostering greater connection to Country and educating people on Gunaikurnai culture. Many interviewees shared their appreciation for the NAIDOC Community Day and spoke of the value of Joint Management in facilitating and encouraging these types of events on Country. The event was seen as an opportunity for Gunaikurnai community to learn culture, strengthen their pride and identity, and connect with mob. One Elder spoke of how they saw Joint Management contributing towards feeling more connected:

“ People are learning culture, connecting with mob through events on Country... Joint Management fosters this connection.

When prompted on the achievements of Joint Management over the past five years, many community members spoke to its contribution to self-determination, with one interviewee describing it as the realisation of self-determination for Gunaikurnai people:

“ Joint Management equals self-determination. That is immensely powerful for us Gunaikurnai.

Another described the most important role of Joint Management as giving Gunaikurnai people a voice to manage Country, which is enabled by a government that wants to listen.

The introduction of more Gunaikurnai signage in the parks was identified by several community members as a more tangible achievement of Joint Management in the last five years. It was shared that the increased volume of Gunaikurnai signage in the Joint Management parks compels both Gunaikurnai and non- Gunaikurnai people to engage with Gunaikurnai history, culture and knowledge. One interviewee expressed that they had a greater interest

in visiting the parks when there was more history of the land, both past and present. Another community member shared that:

“ Visitors now know that they are stepping onto Gunaikurnai Country and this demands a greater level of respect.

An interviewee also spoke of the role that Joint Management plays in supporting community education:

“ Joint Management has fostered a willingness to learn for Indigenous and non-Indigenous community.

There was consensus that Joint Management had facilitated a greater appreciation of Gunaikurnai culture through education, increasing the visibility of culture in the parks and starting conversations between family and friends. One interviewee shared that they had been growing native plants in the Joint Management parks and saw it as an opportunity to educate school kids on how to care for Country through the preservation of native vegetation in what they viewed as Gunaikurnai people’s ‘backyard’.

Employment was identified as an important benefit of Joint Management by community members. Multiple interviewees highlighted how Joint Management had provided them with employment opportunities which had financially supported them and their families and had enabled them to gain qualifications for future employment through training in areas such as heavy vehicle licenses, traffic control, chainsaw use and excavator use. As one community member shared:

“ We’ve seen more jobs for Gunaikurnai...there is an understanding that a ranger job is not necessarily the end goal, but can be a first step towards something else.

Another community member employed as a ranger shared how the job enabled them to get stronger in their Gunaikurnai identity through cultural dancing and teaching. However, one community member recommended that GLaWAC need to take restrictions off who can be a ranger, as the requirement of being Gunaikurnai means some Aboriginal families living on Gunaikurnai Country are excluded from Joint Management employment.

Community members at Knob Reserve also shared some critical perspectives on the work of Joint Management in the last five years, specifically on the balance of power between partners. Some interviewees shared that they don’t see Joint Management as an even partnership, but a one-sided relationship in which Gunaikurnai people are still required to ask permission from government agencies to engage in works or to access the parks. One Elder shared their perspective on what Joint Management means to them:

“ Joint Management is about getting a say in joint wealth – it’s gotta be proper joint.

Two interviewees claimed that Joint Management feels like a box ticking exercise and contended that for this not to be the case, Joint Management would need to give more power to Gunaikurnai locals. This included the freedom to access

Country being true in practice, not just in theory. One community member remarked:

“ *All the booking process is under PV...we can't just go down there, even though it's Native Title.* ”

Another community member was excited to see the integration of cultural burning in Joint Management parks but recognised that the sustainability of this practice required greater cultural awareness and listening from fire officers. However, another interviewee expressed that it's not just about listening, as they felt that good ideas for land management are heard, but there is still no action from Government agencies.

Hopes for the future of Joint Management

Community members voiced their excitement for the future progression of Joint Management and shared several ideas around what they would like to see it achieve in the future.

Education was identified as something that Joint Management can support and contribute to more in the future, especially for young people on Gunaikurnai Country. One community member shared that:

“ *Alongside caring for Country, school education is vital for fostering care and respect for Gunaikurnai culture and knowledge.* ”

That interviewee also spoke of the potential value of social media for Joint Management, which could serve as a far-reaching conduit for information about Country, especially for young people. Multiple interviewees suggested that the Joint Management partners could offer more work experience or mentoring opportunities to young people in school, especially in management roles, and another hoped that Joint Management would do more to support young mob to learn some of the traditional ways. This was expressed by a community Elder:

“ *We need to get more young ones into jobs. It starts with motivating them: if you want to work, you will. One way is to have more opportunities in GLaWAC.* ”

An Elder expressed that young people seem to be losing respect and that they needed to see things that will get them more connected to Country, such as introducing the 'culture of Country' into schools.

Elders at the NAIDOC Community Day also called for more recognition and greater inclusion in decision-making processes. One Elder urged Joint Management decision-makers to ask Elders what they want instead of making decisions on their behalf. Another Elder wanted to see Joint Management introduce more accessible facilities within the parks to enable Gunaikurnai Elders to use and enjoy Country. Citing the theme for the 2023 NAIDOC celebrations, an Elder remarked:

“ *We want to see more parks with shelter and facilities, accessible with pathways...For Our Elders!* ”

Many community members commended the work of GLaWAC in creating the NAIDOC Community Day and recognised the work that had been done in the last 5 years in improving land management practices and making Gunaikurnai culture and people visible in the parks. One interviewee spoke of the importance of organisations like GLaWAC:

“ *Strong voices and organisations, such as GLaWAC, are necessary to continue the advancements that Joint Management has made for mob. These organisations ensure unity amongst clans and must be protected and listened to.* ”

However, there was agreement that while Gunaikurnai Joint Management partners had made important progress in the Joint Management parks, there is still a need for greater visibility of Gunaikurnai people and culture. One community member urged the Joint Management partners to advertise more and have more plaques explaining the cultural significance and stories behind landmarks, both in language and English. Another interviewee shared that they hope for a stronger Gunaikurnai presence in everything that can be managed. There was a hope amongst community members that one day GLaWAC can take control of Joint Management and contract out to Government partners.

Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board

Consultations with the GKTOLMB were conducted in person in Bairnsdale on 3 August 2023, and online on 28 August 2023.

Looking back – what has Joint Management achieved over the past 5 years?

According to one GKTOLMB member, Joint Management has made substantial advances on issues of people and culture, whilst healing Country has been more challenging, especially given the 2019-20 Black Summer bushfires. It was shared that members of the GKTOLMB tend to view the healing of Country as a more longer-term mission. In terms of achievements, the GKTOLMB has supported significant works to strengthen cultural connections and enable culture to be more visible within Joint Management parks, especially through art and signage. In the eyes of the interviewee, this work has been a real success. The interviewee also shared that they have witnessed a positive attitude change amongst PV staff based in regional locations. This perspective was echoed by another member of the GKTOLMB who stated:

“ *There has been a real shift in language and way we process thought and express our thoughts – respect, interrelationships, connectivity, feeling, complexity, listening, ancestors – powerful when we use language that reflects the whole and not just one thing.* ”

One interviewee also referenced the pride in Joint Management that the Gunaikurnai rangers exhibit as being a significant achievement of the past five years. They went on to explain that the high numbers of people that come and go within the ranger ranks, both GLaWAC and PV, does not diminish that achievement. In their view, having a high number of people exposed to Joint Management and then moving on to other roles is healthy for the Joint Management model.

Looking back – where has Joint Management fallen short over the past 5 years?

GLaWAC has had some difficulty meeting expectations within Joint Management

Interviewees shared their view that GLaWAC may have been too ambitious with the agenda and work set out in the Joint Management plan. As posited by one GKTOLMB member, partner organisations must structure themselves with the appropriate capacity and expertise in order to be a reliable and equitable partner in Joint Management endeavours. In their perspective:

“ *GLaWAC are not currently positioned to participate in Joint Management to meet their own expectations, let alone others. In Joint Management, opportunities need to not only be offered, but they also need to be grasped.* ”

However, as one interviewee stated, the high expectations that GLaWAC had set can hardly be criticised, given that Gunaikurnai people were the first to engage in Joint Management in Victoria and therefore, in new territory of what is possible and achievable.

Interviewees also shared their perspective that with GLaWAC expanding its scope and people asking more of them, there is a need for the organisation to grow in a way that may require important structural changes. One GKTOLMB member shared:

“ *Structurally, GLaWAC are not as well positioned as they could or should be to be an equitable partner in Joint Management...They lack some horsepower in middle to senior management...Managing Country is not just about rangers, you need other capabilities and responsibilities and contributions that support what rangers do on a daily basis.* ”

They went on to state:

“ *This whole notion that land or Country management is just about people wandering around, doesn't reflect reality.* ”

A similar perspective was shared by another interviewee who believed that 'Joint Management' was an inappropriate term as it only referred to the function or practice of managing land but not the cultural change that comes with the partnerships. It was suggested that Joint Management could select better terms in the future and perhaps be rephrased to reflect how 'Joint Management' can become 'sole management'.

Funding has not always met the expectations of the Gunaikurnai partners

Through the Recognition Settlement Agreement, GLaWAC has secured ongoing funding, enabling them to shape their participation in Joint Management and its implementation. According to GKTOLMB interviewees, this can be contrasted with the current discretionary funding model that PV operate under in the context of Joint Management, which tends to fluctuate and is less secure. For instance, it was reported that during recent budget discussions to develop joint workplans, PV could only allocate a small amount of funding to the full month's workplan, an amount that was far below the expectations of the GKTOLMB. As voiced by one interviewee:

“ *Always going to be a frustration if government who is part of Joint Management arrangement is in effect hamstringing itself in terms of funding allocated to PV to do what is necessary to manage Country.* ”

This GKTOLMB member went on to explain that if Joint Management is to see innovation and a shared ability to lead change, then it must involve the resources of all partner organisations:

“ *If we're to see innovation and a shared ability to lead change, then it involves the resources of both Gunaikurnai and Government...The RSA allocation is to* ”

give Gunaikurnai more discretion and to pursue things that are important for us... There is a state responsibility that remains in Joint Management. It is unrealistic that Gunaikurnai provide those resources.

It was also shared that without the funding packages that came as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2019-20 bushfires, the GKTOLMB would not have been able to implement a number of Joint Management activities and significant capital works.

GKTOLMB has faced some difficulties in undertaking monitoring and evaluation

GKTOLMB members shared that their monitoring and evaluation aspirations for Joint Management have not quite been met. One interviewee offered their perspective that the Joint Management partners have undertaken more monitoring than evaluation and the GKTOLMB has lacked confidence in its monitoring of Joint Management progress, which according to the interviewee, may be a reflection of its difficulty in this context. However, this GKTOLMB member also expressed their appreciation for the more subjective reviews that have been conducted at the annual reflection workshops.

Another interviewee shared their disappointment that the GKTOLMB has not been able to implement a broader social sampling survey in the past five years. According to the interviewee, views of the broader community has had to come from people working or closely involved in Joint Management. It was stated that there are many methods to get broader insights into community perspectives on Joint Management and there is an opportunity for the GKTOLMB to rekindle this objective in the next five years.

Looking forward – what matters most to you for the next 5 years?

Changing the balance of power within Joint Management

There was a consensus amongst GKTOLMB interviewees that Joint Management has reached a stage of transformation, in which it should be shifting and transitioning away from the familiar patterns. As stated by one interviewee:

“ We want to get away from reinforcing equitable partnerships – not sure we’re in the business of that anymore. We’re in the business of changing the balance.

In this context, there was a sentiment that Joint Management must distance itself from language around ‘intentions’ and ‘aspirations’ and focus on ensuring that, over the long term, Gunaikurnai people are leading the care of their Country every day. As long as there is a partnership, the expectation is clear—Gunaikurnai people should be at the helm.

With this objective in mind, GKTOLMB interviewees spoke of the importance of having the support of government partners – not just in the realm of written commitments but through the resolute dedication to making Gunaikurnai expectations a concrete reality. One interviewee reflected on the frustratingly slow rate of change within government:

“ Especially around RSA [renegotiations], they give you this, then they take something else. We’re ready to roll, but they’re not progressing it enough even with the changes within government...You always find that barrier. They give you this, BUT...There’s always a but.

According to GKTOLMB members, the progress that Joint Management has made so far has been driven by willing individuals, but there is a need for greater alignment across the government partners in order to drive system change.

Another GKTOLMB member expressed their vision that government partners should transition from the practice of respecting and appreciating Gunaikurnai culture in isolated moments and move towards integrating Gunaikurnai culture within each partners’ ways of working:

“ Let’s move from respecting and appreciating Gunaikurnai culture over here, then you have your meeting, to having Gunaikurnai culture at the top and informing everything we do. We need to stop seeing legislation and funding as a barrier and start interpreting it with the right mindset, a mindset of ‘let’s make this work’.

Unity between Joint Management partners

Some GKTOLMB interviewees delved into the dynamics between PV and Gunaikurnai rangers and how they work together, indicating that over the past five years, there have been periodic intersections between the teams but predominantly, PV and Gunaikurnai rangers function as separate entities. As one GKTOLMB member put it:

“ The PV and Gunaikurnai ranger teams often seem to be two parallel universes. Can we try to get the joint into Joint Management, in a way that is more robust?

While one interviewee shared that this separation has its merits, particularly concerning the cultural safety of Gunaikurnai staff, it has failed to facilitate regular interactions between the two organizations at the ranger level, which, according to various interviewees, play a pivotal role in bringing together Gunaikurnai and ‘western’ practices to sustainably manage cultural landscapes. There is clear appetite within the GKTOLMB to infuse a more robust sense of unity into the concept of ‘Joint Management’, with some interviewees recognising that partners are already making progress on this front.

Healing Country

Most GKTOLMB members agreed that a key hope for the next five years and beyond was to witness the healing of Country. According to multiple interviewees, one facet of this hope was for a greater understanding and appreciation of Gunaikurnai culture and Country by the wider community. This included an opportunity for the GKTOLMB to support some Gunaikurnai people who may be unaware of their Country.

It was proposed that a greater level of respect for Gunaikurnai culture will result in a greater understanding and appreciation for how Gunaikurnai people care for Country and in turn, lead to greater respect for Country. As expressed by the GKTOLMB members, if the wider community can respect Country, then Country can eventually heal. Another interviewee built on this perspective, adding that it is not just about respecting Gunaikurnai

Country, but actually practicing that respect. One GKTOLMB member shared their view on respecting Country in the context of ongoing vandalism occurring in some Joint Management parks:

“ If you’re brought up proper, you respect Country. It’s part of cultural obligations. We need to convey across the parks that we manage the broader Gippsland landscape. These rules aren’t written there when you enter the Joint Managed areas but maybe they should be.

Whilst it was acknowledged that the current GKTOLMB members are unlikely to see Gunaikurnai Country when it is completely healed, one interviewee shared a more achievable aspiration for the next five years of Joint Management:

“ In all parts of the massive cultural landscapes that I visit, I want to know and feel that the work of Gunaikurnai people is evident and their impact on the lands and waters where I am is evident.

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation

Consultations with GLaWAC were conducted in person with rangers in Kalimna on 25 July 2023, with members of management in Kalimna on 3 August 2023, and online with members of the board and management on 24 August 2023.

Looking back – what has Joint Management achieved over the past 5 years?

Joint Management has built a strong foundation for widespread attitude change and self-determination for Gunaikurnai people

GLaWAC interviewees agreed that over the past five years, a strong foundation of understanding and appreciation has been built for Joint Management. The perspective was shared that the Joint Management partners have created an environment in which people have a view on what Joint Management means to them and are beginning to share and project these views outwards, perspectives that are being positively received within the Joint Management partners as well as the wider community. In the words of the same interviewee:

“ *This may not sound like a big achievement, but it is an essential foundational element ... feeling connected leads to more confidence and more courage ... Joint Management has given some focus so that we can make changes in our own lives...it's given us freedom to think, freedom to have a bit of an attitude.* ”

Interviewees highlighted a discernible progression in Joint Management staff in terms of their attitude, understanding and awareness of Joint Management, as well as their longevity of employment and increased confidence in the space. More specifically, one interviewee shared that GLaWAC staff have an improved understanding and confidence in what they can ask of and expect from the partner agencies, which is a significant achievement.

When prompted on the potential for conflict between Law and Lore on Gunaikurnai Country, a GLaWAC member referenced the strong foundation that they had built:

“ *For Gunaikurnai people, because of the environment we've created here, the two don't clash as much as they do in other places, because of the strength of partnerships and relationships, so if there's potentially going to be an issue, I have a very high level of confidence that we can navigate the situation.* ”

GLaWAC interviewees also emphasised that Joint Management seems to have significantly progressed in supporting self-determination for Gunaikurnai people in the past five years. As explained by one interviewee:

“ *[GLaWAC staff] are learning that self-determination [in Joint Management] does not just mean conventional park management work but are discovering how to put their stamp on the parks independently.* ”

When prompted on the path to sole management, one GLaWAC interviewee shared their perspective that Joint Management does not need to be pushed in this direction yet and that the self-determination that has been achieved so far

is a great foundational achievement in itself. They agreed that the aspiration for sole management is valid and something to explore for the future, however also expressed their opinion that sole management is more of a glimmer on the radar, and not yet a legitimate step for the Joint

Management partners to consider. From their perspective, there are a myriad of tasks required for the proper management of parks, many of which GLaWAC do not have the capabilities or capacity to fulfill and may, at least for now, want the government agencies to own.

Creating opportunities for Gunaikurnai people

Many GLaWAC interviewees shared their satisfaction in how Joint Management has created more jobs and business opportunities for Gunaikurnai people. GLaWAC members shared that they are witnessing improved skills and knowledge in those people who have taken up employment opportunities within GLaWAC. One interviewee also referred to the value of the secondments that are taking place between GLaWAC and government partners:

“ *Even some of our staff have been taken over by PV but sort of in a good way. Still working with us. Positive there. They are improving their skill level.* ”

One GLaWAC member spoke of their experience in working for the government partners:

“ *I find meetings good – we can build relationships with partners, PV and DEECA, a better understanding. There is a lot more to do behind the scenes besides being on Country – it's good to learn about this.* ”

Other GLaWAC interviewees reflected on the training opportunities that had been provided to them by GLaWAC. Training in areas such as operating chainsaws and fencing was seen as incredibly useful for their roles in Joint Management and one interviewee shared their view that GLaWAC provides a good balance between training and actually getting out on Country. One GLaWAC member highlighted the professional growth seen in some of their colleagues through Joint Management:

“ *They've never used computers in their life, now they are a tech whiz, they've got their licence!* ”

Looking back – where has Joint Management fallen short over the past 5 years?

An uneven partnership has undermined effective land management

Some GLaWAC interviewees expressed their view that the efficacy of Joint Management is still undermined by an uneven partnership between the Gunaikurnai and government partners. It was shared that Joint Management can still feel like a tick-box exercise in which government agencies are engaging with the Gunaikurnai people, but still retain the ultimate authority in the management of Gunaikurnai Country. One GLaWAC interviewee shared an example:

“ *Sometimes it feels like DEECA give us smaller grassland burns, or four hectares of bush that haven't burned for 60 years.* ”

Another GLaWAC interviewee shared that DEECA continue to ‘torture’ the land through their controlled burn methods whilst GLaWAC have found it difficult to expand the use of cultural burning practices. It is in this context that some GLaWAC employees expressed that neither Gunaikurnai Country nor people are healed yet under Joint Management. Some GLaWAC interviewees also expressed their resentment at being required to go through PV processes and paperwork in order to undertake works in the Joint Management parks. In addition to this, some GLaWAC interviewees reported that they have been unable to access sections of the Joint Management parks due to not having all of the required keys. As stated by one interviewee:

“A lot of parks we don’t get to go to because we don’t have a key...it should be automatic, we shouldn’t have to ask and wait for it.

Another interviewee shared their perspective:

“There is a lack of cultural authority as a Traditional Owner group on your own Country...defeats the purpose of saying we are cultural rangers.

One GLaWAC interviewee also expressed their disaffection with the occasionally sluggish Joint Management decision-making systems, using an example from the Knob Recreation Reserve:

“The pony club is still illegally out there. We’re in the process of getting authority, but it takes a very long time. Thousands and thousands of years of heritage being trampled into the ground for kids to ride ponies.

Finally, another GLaWAC member expressed their view that PV has highlighted the power imbalance with its implementation of the first right of refusal model:

“The preferred procurement model we did with PV was really good on paper, could be done quickly and easily, but a struggle for some people [within PV] to get it, treated it with attitude like “do we have to”. For example, we got knocked back on some road contracts although it was in budget because someone made a judgement that GLaWAC was not

ready for that. Not malicious, but poor judgement – they made some calls on our behalf. We want to avoid that.

Feeling stretched by the Joint Management model

When prompted on where Joint Management has fallen short over the past five years, some GLaWAC members highlighted that the model has required more work than expected. One interviewee shared that GLaWAC did not manage expectations well enough at the start of Joint Management, perhaps setting up the organisation to not be able to meet those expectations. For example, as one interviewee explains:

“We had an expectation of a seamless process: create a plan, employ rangers, identify priorities and go and do it. We didn’t consider the human or life element.

This ‘life element’ has included staff turnover, bushfires, COVID-19, and some interpretation challenges. The interviewee also had expectations around people’s understanding of Gunaikurnai culture and Joint Management and has found it challenging to be constantly bringing people up to speed.

Other GLaWAC interviewees shared their criticism of having to “jump through the hoops” of the GKTOLMB to get money to undertake Joint Management works. One interviewee suggested that the rangers could hold their own budget to be able to fulfil their function more efficiently. Others shared that they have felt stretched beyond their capacity:

“At the moment so much happens at GLaWAC... We need to work out in Joint Management who’s doing what...Sometimes it feels like the rangers have to pick up the pieces.

“All the stuff you are expected to do, it takes a toll on you.

Lack of cultural change in government partners

GLaWAC interviewees spoke of a disconnect in understanding of Joint Management

between government partner employees working regionally and those working in central operations. One interviewee explained that for the government agencies, education on Joint Management is strong in regional postings, but far weaker centrally. It was expressed that those in government agencies who are disconnected from the space and land they’re working on, tend not to have a complete understanding of Joint Management. For instance, according to one GLaWAC interviewee:

“The biggest challenge within PV is those who are disconnected from the space and land that they are working on...they don’t understand that GLaWAC are the decision-makers in this space...PV needs to bring staff along for the journey...and management needs to have the courage to let people go if they are racist and refuse to change.

Other GLaWAC employees agreed that there is still work to be done in bringing government partner staff along for the journey and that the government agencies must do more to address and manage issues of racism and a lack of cultural change within their teams. As communicated by one GLaWAC staff member:

“It is not [GLaWAC’s] responsibility to educate PV staff when PV are negligent in their management and ownership of staff attitudes. It’s not just about respecting other cultures, but simply respecting other people.

According to an interviewee, GLaWAC has faced similar attitude change issues with DEECA:

“DEECA are good at funding GLaWAC to allow us to do what we want to do, however, DEECA are not changing as an organisation and giving money does not absolve you from responsibility.

A somewhat similar misalignment between the actions and words of PV was identified by a GLaWAC employee:

“PV’s board has clearly stated that they see cultural and environmental outcomes as equal, but their funding and delivery model makes it clear that they are not.

Looking forward – what matters most to you for the next 5 years?

Enabling effective workforces

GLaWAC employees are interested in exploring how Joint Management can better utilise the workforces of each of the partner agencies to work together more effectively. One GLaWAC interviewee shared their perspective on attempting to get Gunaikurnai and PV rangers to work together:

“We need to think about how we can better utilise the workforces. We’ve tried a couple of times to put Gunaikurnai and PV rangers together to do stuff. It works a bit but takes a lot of driving from leaders. When there are things that we replicate, we can share and do stuff together. What’s the need, what do we actually need to do? You don’t need to check what colour shirt you’ve got on. Instead, we should be asking: what’s the best outcome for Country?”

Some GLaWAC interviewees also suggested that collaboration between Joint Management workforces could function better if the Gunaikurnai rangers had their own space, based more centrally in Bairnsdale. According to interviewees, this may encourage more opportunities for PV rangers to be invited to the space to develop the skills of Gunaikurnai rangers and vice-versa.

According to GLaWAC interviewees, another part of enabling an effective Joint Management workforce is growing the confidence and capabilities of Gunaikurnai employees. As explained by one interviewee, GLaWAC want rangers, as well as the wider team, to be confident in challenging the Joint Management partners and presenting new ways of approaching projects. Another interviewee suggested that GLaWAC could help build this confidence by implementing a rotating role in which rangers can gain experience in the management of Joint Management projects. There was a consensus amongst GLaWAC interviewees that the rangers are still too limited in their authorities to effectively protect Country. As it was put by one GLaWAC interviewee:

“ The biggest thing is having a say about what happens. I don't want to be told I should go do stuff. I know what I want to do.

Another GLaWAC member echoed this sentiment:

“ It's our land, we need to have a really big say in it, not just manage it. We've had so many Elders who have passed, who set this up. This is where we're going for the future.

According to some GLaWAC interviewees, enabling Gunaikurnai rangers to engage in direct protection at the ground level of Joint Management, without requiring the help or sign-off of enforcement officers, will ensure that Joint Management is on the right path in helping to stabilise Country.

Growing GLaWAC as an organisation

GLaWAC members agreed that there is room for the organisation to grow and expand in the next five years. Referring to the increase in their Joint Management responsibilities over the past five years, some GLaWAC interviewees called for GLaWAC to focus on employing more staff, including the potential for a whole new team in the Latrobe Valley. One interviewee spoke of the new teams that would be required to manage new Joint Management parks:

“ We've got seven rangers across ten parks, just got handed another four [parks]. It's hard to spread ourselves over this land, let alone do all this other stuff, let alone Sea Country. It's good that we're going to employ eight more rangers. But it takes time to train them all up.

Another interviewee called for GLaWAC to have greater ownership of projects and for each project to have a clear five-year vision. They shared that they would like to see rangers step up to own these projects and build and expand their influence within all Joint Management partners.

Several other GLaWAC members wanted the organisation to prioritise the creation of circular income flow. As shared by one GLaWAC employee:

“ If we want stuff done in our Joint Management parks, we should give the contract to NRM. Keep everything in-house, all money stays here. If we contract out to someone else, we need to have a crew person work there. Needs to be the way it happens.

GLaWAC members also spoke about the importance of staying open to new opportunities, from becoming leaders in cultural tourism or collaborating in academic research on cultural interpretations, to generating innovation in the environmental sector. One interviewee mentioned the Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers) Camping and Access Strategy as a project in which GLaWAC was able to lead best practice in Joint Management:

“ Doing cultural mapping first and using that to inform future management...we should be doing that everywhere.

Another GLaWAC member reflected on future opportunities for the organisation:

“ We need to think about opportunities for our mob that can grow from Joint Management. For us to grow. That can stimulate the creation of new

businesses. Alleviate our mob out of poverty. We don't want to overburden ourselves, but we can look at what's happening with indigenous mobs outside Victoria, even overseas, to make sure we're thinking outside the box, trying something different...what opportunities are there for investment, tech transfer, increased market access?

Replicating the Knob Recreation Reserve Committee of Management model

When prompted on the possibility of replicating the Knob Recreation Reserve model of management, interviewees had mixed responses. One interviewee was excited to explore the option, at a location such as Corringale Foreshore Reserve, however, wanted to first ensure that this is something GLaWAC actually wants to do. They went on to explain that Corringale Foreshore Reserve has more assets to manage and, in their view, GLaWAC does not currently have the resources to manage them. They also shared that the

revenue from Corringale currently goes into PV's central consolidated revenue and would not automatically flow to GLaWAC. Another interviewee suggested that an intermediate Committee of Management model would be more appropriate at Corringale, a model which did not require GLaWAC to take on the full responsibility for asset management. However, this was contested by another GLaWAC employee, who posited that simply building a functional relationship model between the Joint Management partners would produce the same outcomes as implementing a Committee of Management.

Increasing community engagement

There was strong agreement amongst interviewees that they would like to see more Gunaikurnai community engaging with GLaWAC and accessing and utilising their Country in the next five years. As communicated by one GLaWAC interviewee:

“ To heal Country, we need to heal the people, and to heal people, we need to get them out here.

Another GLaWAC member shared their goal for the future of Joint Management:

“ The biggest thing is being connected to Country, connected to Community.

It was also posited that GLaWAC employees can encourage more widespread engagement in Joint Management by increasing the visibility of Gunaikurnai people on Country. As stated by one interviewee:

“ Having a presence on Country...people see that, they show more respect when we're there, we need to get up there more, we need to be there.

It was also expressed that GLaWAC need to continue to provide employment and capability-building opportunities for Gunaikurnai community members, especially when, according to one interviewee, there are so many potential workers out in community that would be interested in venturing into the Joint Management space. However, according to one GLaWAC member, engagement with community has been uneven across Gunaikurnai Country:

“ The challenge – and opportunity, of course – with the four new Joint Managed parks in the west, will be to engage with a different demographic of mob in

Latrobe Valley in particular...we don't have a strong enough connection with the mob down there. We need to help a mob that are already less engaged with us to be more engaged with us.

GLaWAC interviewees identified communication as a key factor in encouraging engagement from the Gunaikurnai community. Interviewees recommended that future Joint Management products must be user-friendly and accessible for the broader section of the community. This includes the advertising of

GLaWAC jobs, the writing style of Joint Management reports, and the promotion of community events such as the Knob Recreation Reserve NAIDOC Event.

Another way that GLaWAC can encourage Gunaikurnai community engagement in Joint Management is to continue to highlight the achievements of the Joint Management model and of individuals as well as continuing to provide opportunities for development and growth of its employees. As one interviewee posited:

“ *GLaWAC need to ensure that people recognise where they've come from to where they are now, and how opportunities within Joint Management have facilitated that. Wanting to see change in one's own life is a real achievement in itself.*

To facilitate these opportunities for employment and development, some interviewees suggested that GLaWAC should introduce more entry-level pathways for community. This could include school-based apprenticeships or work experience for young people. However, one GLaWAC member shared some of the barriers that will continue to deter young people from applying:

“ *If we look at all our people, so and so wants a job here, but hasn't got a licence, doesn't want to do a drug test, or can't read or write, so they're not applying for that. They should be able to feel like they can apply for a crew job in a crew organisation. . . We need better roles, younger fellas coming through...They can get a bit lost, it's good to get them direct to GLaWAC...Joint Management gives you opportunity, more freedom.*

Knob Recreation Reserve Management Committee Inc

The consultation with the KRRMC was conducted in person at the Knob Reserve on 25 July 2023.

Looking back – what has Joint Management achieved over the past 5 years?

Enabling capacity building opportunities

Members of the KRRMC agreed that it has served and will continue to serve as a pathway for young Gunaikurnai people to step into leadership and governance roles and gain experience working with partners and negotiating what can be done on Country. In the past five years, the KRRMC has provided many opportunities for externals, especially GLaWAC rangers, to attend and observe the meetings. As one committee member put it, the committee provides an enabling and authorising environment for rangers to develop their governance skills and lead projects at the Knob Reserve. The committee members explained that several projects at the reserve had been led by the Joint Management rangers in the past five years, including the construction of picnic tables and five shields that represent the five Gunaikurnai clans.

According to one committee member, it has been the unique model of the committee that has allowed rangers to lead on various projects, both in design and delivery. As one committee member explained:

“ *The committee provides lots of opportunity for our young people to attend and get involved. It's a place to test and experiment! They can step into leadership, governance, working with partners, negotiating what we want to do on our land. Rangers can get experience here to evolve into management roles, paving the way for younger generations...It might be uncomfortable for them but if they're not here, how will they know if they can contribute?*

According to another interviewee, you are only able to lead if your governance model sets you up to lead, and the Committee of Management model, as a single land management entity, allows for Gunaikurnai to lead and govern from the front, paving the way for younger generations.

Looking back – where has Joint Management fallen short over the past 5 years?

There is still a power imbalance between Joint Management partners

There was strong consensus amongst KRRMC interviewees that the relationship between GLaWAC and PV could be perceived as paternalistic. According to one committee member, there hasn't been enough behavioural change within PV or transfer of power, control or decision-making for Joint Management to be truly considered a joint partnership. This interviewee contends that for Joint Management to be implemented appropriately, there must be equal authority between partners. Another committee member shared their perspective:

“ *It's about PV actually putting their money where their mouth is so we can move from a parent-child [relationship] to an adult-adult [relationship].*

Structural barriers still persist within the government partners

KRRMC interviewees raised their concerns that there are still structural barriers within the government partners impeding the transfer of decision-making power to Gunaikurnai people. One of the barriers that still remains is the absence of a universal understanding of Joint Management within the government agencies. For instance, one interviewee shared that they recently had to remind PV employees that one of the parks is joint managed. In their view, this type of occurrence is more common in PV than in DEECA:

“ DEECA more regionalised, PV more centralised – still people meeting for first time, message hasn't quite gotten through yet [in PV].

This committee interviewee expressed their perspective that the respect and understanding of Joint Management within PV is incomplete and there is still work to be done in circulating the messaging of Joint Management. KRRMC members also reflected on why shared decision-making seemed to be more possible for the Knob Reserve compared to the other Joint Managed areas:

“ You can only lead if your governance sets you up to lead. The [Knob Reserve] Committee has a unique model that has allowed that. Through the RSA renegotiations, Gunaikurnai have asked for something similar for the other parks and reserves, as there hasn't been enough behavioural change around transfer of power and control and decision-making and being a truly joint partnership. The challenge is in the legislation that sits around PV. All the land that PV currently manages sits on their land register, it would need to come off their land register. We need to get PV on board.

Looking ahead – what matters most to you for the next 5 years?

Community connection and participation in Joint Management

KRRMC members expressed their aspiration for Gunaikurnai community to participate more in Joint Management activities and become more connected to culture and Country in the next five years and beyond. Interviewees identified the Knob Recreation Reserve as a place for both cultural connection and capacity-building opportunities for community. One committee member suggested that the Reserve could be used as a location to practice cultural customs and traditions, such as boomerang throwing or dancing ceremonies. Another member added that because the Knob Recreation Reserve, compared to other Joint Management parks, is more visible to the wider community, it is important that the reserve continues to host cultural practices to help increase

understanding and respect for Gunaikurnai people and culture.

According to one interviewee, this could include bringing more culturally significant plants back to the Reserve. Interviewees also agreed that the Reserve should be a place for Gunaikurnai Elders to spend more time on Country. Some ideas suggested included the Reserve hosting more events for Elders, improving accessible infrastructure and potentially construct a building or space for Elders in the Reserve.

KRRMC interviewees also explained their plan to continue to facilitate capacity-building opportunities at Knob Recreation Reserve, especially for Joint Management rangers. Committee members agreed that they hope to have rangers participating more in Joint Management governance. According to one member:

“ I want to see rangers stepping up in terms of leading the committee, not necessarily being the chair...but want their project concepts and designs.

It was also suggested that rangers could run tours at the Knob Recreation Reserve, which could provide a source of revenue. There was a consensus within KRRMC to aspire towards the Gunaikurnai people being able to manage Country without needing the regulatory approval of government partners; an enabling and authorising environment which the committee must continue to provide.

Parks Victoria

Consultations with Parks Victoria were conducted online between 27 July 2023 and 10 August 2023, covering Rangers, Regional Coordinators, and Regional Managers.

Looking back – what has Joint Management achieved over the past 5 years?

A strong relationship has been established between Parks Victoria and Gunaikurnai partners

PV interviewees shared their pride and satisfaction on the achievements of Joint Management in the past 5 years. There was consensus that there has been a positive shift within all Joint Management partners towards improved partnerships and more specifically, that a great relationship had been developed between PV and GLaWAC, despite some 'small bumps' along the way. One PV interviewee commented:

“ When I think about relationships with other Traditional Owner groups across Victoria, our relationship with GLaWAC is real success story. It's worth celebrating. There's a real strength to it. But it's based on lots of individual relationships. It's strong, but it's not resilient.

According to several PV interviewees, in the early years of Joint Management, it was difficult to bring some PV employees along the journey due to a lack of understanding and potential elements of racism. It was reported that some PV employees harboured an anxiety that Joint Management would lead to them being out of a job and no longer managing the parks. However, there was consensus amongst PV interviewees that the organisation had progressed significantly on this issue. Interviewees reported that most PV employees are now on board with Joint Management and had developed their understanding of its purpose and objectives. One PV employee reflected:

“ Everyone I have worked with through Joint Management seems to have the same passion and drive for looking after Country together.

One interviewee shared that seeing this cultural shift internally in PV has been really positive, but they would still be interested in listening the perspective of the Gunaikurnai partner organisations on this matter, to see if there was agreement.

A cultural shift within Parks Victoria has facilitated greater collaboration and two-way learning between the Joint Management partners

PV interviewees reported that this cultural shift within PV has encouraged closer collaboration between Gunaikurnai people and PV employees on the ground. The working bees between GLaWAC and PV have been a particularly enjoyable and valuable experience for many PV employees, with interviewees reporting that it provides an opportunity for informal connections in which capacity building and knowledge sharing happen in a relaxed manner, on Country. As captured by one PV interviewee:

“ You see this in the working bees in parks between PV and Gunaikurnai: laughing together, a relaxed feeling. Gunaikurnai rangers want to learn how

to do emails, PV staff are willing to sit side-by-side with them, without embarrassment. These small things are really important.

Another PV interviewee expressed their excitement that this close partnership between PV and GLaWAC is now being represented on the uniforms of rangers:

“Elders [have long wanted] to see rangers with dual branding...we just got that... I nearly burst into tears knowing how long of a journey it's been...we're finally seeing great progress.

Other PV interviewees shared their perspectives on the two-way learning that has taken place in fire management, stating that they had learnt about the importance of Cultural Burning and had witnessed its effectiveness in managing, protecting and healing Country. One PV interviewee shared:

“I had the opportunity to go on Country and talk about different views of what fire management looks like...we had a really enriching discussion that happened quite organically...I came away with a much better understanding of just how intricate the use of fire for cultural objectives is and how it could be applied very practically to effectively manage Country.

Another PV member recounted what they had learned about what it means to manage a cultural landscape:

“There was an incident a few years ago when a few hundred wedge-tailed eagles were poisoned by a private landowner...I was talking to an Elder down the street, he was a big imposing fella, to see him quivering in tears, saying “they were my Elders that they killed”. It gave me a real sense of his loss, a very raw sense of the intangible notion of culture. When we think about the cultural landscape, we need to understand that it's not just about an artefact that may or may not be recorded on ACHRIS, it's about the stories and history that goes with it.

Witnessing a growth in GLaWAC's capabilities and the growing number of GLaWAC projects on Country

PV interviewees shared their excitement in witnessing GLaWAC's growing capabilities and project portfolio as well as voicing their satisfaction in making a small contribution to the change. However, they also noted that as GLaWAC's capacity grows as a partner, so too does the ask on them. One interviewee shared their experience of witnessing a growth in capabilities:

“I had the opportunity to directly manage Gunaikurnai trainees...to see them become more confident in PV skills while using their cultural skills as well was fantastic...I'm not taking credit for that, but I saw real change, these guys becoming confident enough to make decisions without feeling the need to come back to me.

PV interviewees also recognised that this growth in capabilities and capacity has translated to a greater number of Gunaikurnai-led projects on Country. As heard from PV, these projects have enhanced the visibility and presence of Gunaikurnai culture through signage and branding. Two locations were referred to as having great signage and Gunaikurnai cultural visibility, Corringale Foreshore Reserve and Sperm Whale Head at Lakes National Park, which according to one interviewee, has been used as a model for other Joint Management parks. As described by another PV employee:

“It has created a greater awareness that people are on Joint Managed Country

Looking back – where has Joint Management fallen short over the past 5 years?

There have been communication breakdowns between Parks Victoria and GLaWAC

According to PV interviewees, for the last five years, the relationship between GLaWAC and PV has been amicable and productive, despite some minor hiccups. However, some PV employees pointed out that the partnership can feel fragile at times and that the strength of the relationship between the two partners tends to rely on lots of relationships between individuals rather than a shared understanding of how to work together. As one interviewee put it:

“Sometimes feels like PV and GLaWAC have a relationship that could be fractured fairly easily. If there was more integration between the two organisations in that Joint Management space, then that would perhaps lead to a stronger partnership approach.

One interviewee identified that knowledge on 'traditional land management practices' can sometimes be assumed, when the knowledge is not necessarily obvious to individuals within PV and GLaWAC:

“There's an assumption that we know how to manage Country, when it's more about building capacity and discovering how to manage Country together. Traditional practices may need to be reinvigorated then applied in a contemporary setting – how do we understand what that looks like today? PV comes at this from a statutory perspective, Gunaikurnai people will come to it differently. What does it look like when they come together?

This sentiment was echoed by another interviewee who wanted to know exactly how PV could improve in their approach to working together with GLaWAC:

“We need to know what GLaWAC need from us more. Sometimes PV will need to be told: what does cultural safety really mean [for different individuals], what are we not doing right.

There was also uncertainty on how Gunaikurnai traditional practices can be applied in a contemporary setting and a suggestion that they may have to be reinvigorated further. One PV employee expressed their opinion:

“Joint Management is about supporting Gunaikurnai people to build their capacity to be able to manage Joint Management parks in contemporary manner – and marry that contemporary requirement with their cultural practices...we have a way to go here.

Not all levels of the organisation are connected with and understand Joint Management

Some PV members shared that there seems to be a disconnect between the 'on-the-ground' progress in Joint Management parks and the lack of engagement from those more detached from everyday work. One PV interviewee shared their view on the matter:

“At the grassroots level it's broadly ok, there are always pockets of people who don't get it, but we can deal with that through natural attrition!

At the executive level, there are broadly the best intentions. But there's a bit in the middle that we haven't got right...The central delivery arm – capital infrastructure and the corporate functions based in Melbourne – they don't get Joint Management. Some people try. Some people don't.

Another PV member shared their perspective on the internal education issues they have faced:

“ *How we communicate [within PV] still occasionally fails. Especially with new parks coming, we want to make sure that PV people in new parks really understand what [Joint Management] is. Not about being able to turn everything into a national park, but about working on Country together. PV employees still need to be educated more on Joint Management.* ”

Joint Management has not always felt like an even partnership

Several PV interviewees expressed that the Joint Management partnership has not always felt 'joint' over the past 5 years. It was shared that a lot of Joint Management projects have been fragmented and Joint Management partners were not actually working together. This lack of joint effort was a cause for concern for some interviewees, who emphasised the need for Joint Management partners to work closely together for more effective projects. While recognising that Gunaikurnai partners have limited capacity and competing priorities, some PV interviewees felt as though too much Joint Management project work was left to their teams. As one PV member reflected:

“ *There's been some frustration [from the PV team] that time-critical services in parks were not getting done to the standard that visitors and we expect. We assumed that the Gunaikurnai would look after those critical services – I'm not sure we ever had a conversation or agreement that that would take place. We didn't understand enough the disparity in these capabilities, and we didn't understand enough the journey that the Gunaikurnai are on. The expectation didn't match reality.* ”

This sentiment was echoed by another PV interviewee:

“ *We handed it [Joint Management parks] back but PV still do most of the work and are responsible for all of those legal liabilities.* ”

One interviewee suggested that Gunaikurnai partners, specifically GLaWAC, improve their communication approach in situations where their capacity cannot meet the working requirements of the partnership. However, one PV interviewee felt as though many PV teams set their expectations too high for the relevant capabilities of GLaWAC. They contended that PV management could have done better to help PV teams to understand that there is a clear disparity in resources and capacity between the two partners and to align their expectations to the development journey that Gunaikurnai partners are on. One PV interviewee shared an example of GLaWAC's capacity issues:

“ *It's difficult to get On Country works to happen west of Bairnsdale. These parks are more removed from where GLaWAC's base is, where people live, where their relationships are. There are also areas that are more remote and hard to get to, it's several hours to come and go back. We understand that...we've been*

focusing our tasks with Gunaikurnai rangers so that they can stay overnight.

Another PV employee spoke of the beginning of Joint Management and the lack of alignment between the expectations and reality of the Gunaikurnai partners' capacity:

“ *Gunaikurnai people bit off more than they could chew – had great aspirations. Parks Victoria said here it is, but Gunaikurnai [partners] were not built for it. They didn't have the structural support or business knowledge...Our expectation of them was too much, too quickly.* ”

Inflexibility in legislation, funding and government structures

Many PV interviewees recognised that rigid legislation, funding and bureaucratic government processes have been a potential barrier to effective Joint Management in the past 5 years. As captured by one interviewee:

“ *Legislation is the pain point...How can you have a true partnership when one side has all the power and all the authority and the other side has nothing, really.* ”

As expressed by another PV interviewee, the legislative environment that Joint Management sits within is very inflexible, while Joint Management, by nature, requires flexibility. However, one PV employee contended that Joint Management partners must avoid using the legislation as an excuse:

“ *Let's think about how we can do this within current boundaries...There are things you can do with the right intent. We can set up good governance without changing the legislation.* ”

Other PV employees suggested that the legislation needs to be 'rewired' bit by bit to accommodate for Traditional Owners and Joint Management. In the case of fire management within Joint Management, one interviewee explains:

“ *PV's government agency approach is tied up in hurdle after hurdle of the most detailed planning requirements that it is very hard to*

see how you create opportunity on Country to allow learning and knowledge sharing in that fire management space.

Multiple PV interviewees highlighted the issue of having a limited budget to support the Gunaikurnai partners in Joint Management. Not allocating sufficient ongoing budgets to government partners to implement Joint Management has real operational consequences, as one PV member shared:

“ *One of the challenges is that the balance is uneven. In a Joint Managed park, GLaWAC are paying their staff, and PV are paying GLaWAC to do work on the park. We are the holders of the budget. For example, for roadworks in one of the parks, through the first right of refusal process, the GLaWAC NRM crew are doing the work in partnership with Cranes [Civil and Surfacing]. GLaWAC want 10km of road in the park, but we only have money for 2km... It's good that more funding is being provided for GLaWAC, but we are balancing an increasingly limited budget for management of those parks. This creates issues for how we can actually support them.* ”

Other PV interviewees described how the Joint Management plan has not always been compatible with the original statutory plans for managing the parks. One PV member explained that whilst the plans do not necessarily conflict, each of their objectives are not always aligned. Referencing the issue of recreational rock climbers in the Grampians who have impacted an important cultural site, this interviewee suggested that these types of issues could be dealt with more effectively with a move towards a Committee of Management model. However, the PV member also highlighted that it would be particularly challenging to set up a Committee of Management within the current legislative framework of the National Parks Act 1975.

Looking ahead – what matters most to you for the next 5 years?

Deeper integration between the Joint Management partners

PV interviewees hoped for more opportunities to work closely together with Gunaikurnai partners and share each other's knowledge and experience on Country. There was appetite for greater integration between PV and GLaWAC to facilitate greater connection and collaboration between each organisation's employees. One interviewee wished for the implementation of a joint working spaces, so that rangers and other Joint Management roles can work together in a more organic way. This feeling was captured by a PV interviewee:

“ There needs to be a real willingness from our teams to understand the role we need to play to provide support and foster capacity for Gunaikurnai people involved in Joint Management. We need to be proactively creating the right kind of opportunities and having respectful conversations, and this needs to happen right down to the works programming and planning level. There needs to be a real effort to make time and space in our incredibly busy schedules to spend time together on Country, to reinforce that mutual understanding and learning.

Another PV member wondered:

“ Is there another way of bringing the workforce together, being in the same space together, sharing the authorising environment together?

Other interviewees shared that they hoped for more learning and knowledge sharing through joint workshops as well as the creation of an outwards facing partnership through 'dual badging'. However, some interviewees emphasised that a successful partnership is not just about working together on-the-ground or having 'dual badging' but having equality in decision-making and equal responsibility at all levels. As one interviewee stated:

“ Relationship needs to be more structurally sound with deeper integration [between Joint Management partners]. This includes working on the ground together (i.e. Rangers) but equally, we must also bring a greater focus to how senior management works together.

Interviewees agreed that having shared planning and shared accountabilities from the level of daily park management up to operations and strategy, is what makes Joint Management a true partnership. Some interviewees could foresee a situation in which PV is effectively the contractor for the work that the Gunaikurnai partners wish to complete. For one PV interviewee, this included GLaWAC providing input and direction into the preservation of totemic flora and fauna that are currently under threat across Gunaikurnai Country.

Creating a better-defined partnership and considering sole management

There was consensus amongst many PV interviewees that the Joint Management partnership still needs to be better defined and communicated within government and across the different Joint Management partners, so that each partner can collectively understand what Joint Management means. One PV employee shared their aspirations for building a better understanding of Joint Management over the next five years:

“ I want everyone to be on the same page. Joint Management – this is how it looks; this is how it works. Important to make this really clear...so that everything else we do is through partnership.

The current review of the 2019 Partnership Agreement between GLaWAC and PV was mentioned as an important communicative tool to build a better understanding of Joint Management and drive cultural change within PV. One PV member reflected:

“ The partnership agreement review is going to be really, really important. One of our flaws from last time is that we didn't socialise and embed it in how we do business...This is what we need to do to make Joint Management and the relationship with GLaWAC real for everyone in the organisation...each of us needs to understand how it works on the ground.

Another PV interviewee highlighted the importance gaining further clarity on what the aspirations of the Gunaikurnai partners are in the context of Joint Management:

“ The reality is Traditional Owners don't want to do everything, but want Joint Management relationship, shared ownership. At the moment, PV own it and have all the obligations and responsibilities, but Joint Management is about shared ownership.

One aspiration of Gunaikurnai partners that was discussed by most PV members, was the

possibility of sole management in the future. This goal was summed up by a PV interviewee:

“ It has taken a few years to get traction but will be snowballing from now on. There is more confidence on both sides on what Joint Management means. It was a big thing to take on 5 years ago, in another 5 years' time [we] won't believe where we were 5 years before. It's happening. Eventually... we'll be one agency, whatever name that is. Eventually Gunaikurnai will be the land manager of these lands and we'll be working for them. That's the way it's heading. It's their land, it's fair enough.

Other PV employees called for a slower approach in moving from Joint Management to sole management. As stated by one interviewee, instead of seeing these management systems as a binary either-or, they suggested that Joint Management could move towards an intermediate model, tailored towards the particularities of each park or reserve:

“ Maybe we could do a pilot in the next two years, perhaps for Corringale. Perhaps Gunaikurnai become the primary managers for Corringale, but with a service-level agreement for PV to manage the commercial aspects, so that Gunaikurnai can access resources that we can't hand over in cash.

Another PV member detailed what that might look like at an operational level:

“ We need to work with GLaWAC to get to shared positions on objectives for any given park. These are small units, so we can manage it. Those bits that are important to GLaWAC, we can share the planning, split the accountabilities. This is where we work together, this is how we work together, right down to how are we going to manage these tracks. GLaWAC might not want to do it all, but they want to say how it's done. We could have a situation where PV is effectively the contractor.

More opportunities for Gunaikurnai capability building within Parks Victoria

There was a strong consensus amongst interviewees that PV needs to provide more capability building opportunities for Gunaikurnai people through Joint Management. Multiple PV interviewees had witnessed a real willingness from PV teams to understand the role they need to play in supporting and fostering this capacity. As shared by one PV employee:

“*For our teams, it's about getting into a position where we're providing support and creating opportunities and having respectful conversations right down to planning level, so that in 5 years' time, Gunaikurnai people involved in Joint Management feel like they have really good and supportive relationships with PV and can really grow that capability and capacity to feel like they're effective in Joint Management.*”

Another PV employee shared that they would like to see PV introduce cultural ranger roles within PV teams, to not only build the park management capabilities of those Gunaikurnai employees but to also have a person within the team that can represent the interests of their community. In their view:

“*Having someone who could talk to our project plans with Gunaikurnai authority would be a great asset. Someone who can represent Gunaikurnai interests in emergency management planning in fire suppression...would need to be a new position – the position description would need to be specific to managing and connecting Country and TOs – would be breaking a bit of new ground with our workforce.*”

Some PV interviewees also identified the potential for capability building and mentoring for roles other than rangers, such as administration or business support. There was a practical idea offered by one PV member for building capacity in these support roles:

“*Being a ranger is not for everyone – that's an opportunity! Let's create proper traineeship programs for admin and business to build that skill level from the ground up. It would be so easy to do here.*”

Improved awareness and understanding of the Joint Management parks as Gunaikurnai Country

Many PV interviewees held a similar aspiration for the future of Joint Management, that all residents and visitors to Gippsland and the parks, would recognise that they are on Gunaikurnai Country. A PV interviewee shared their perspective that it takes a lot of work to bring the wider, non-Gunaikurnai community along the journey of Joint Management:

“*In my experience, community perceive Joint Management as obstacle rather than status quo – just look at social media posts around track closures and area track closure – we need input from Gunaikurnai and others who can assist, to try and explain what Joint Management is about.*”

One interviewee stated their hopes for the future:

“*Whenever you go into a Joint Management Park, you know whose country you're on, there is dual badging, everyone understands it, you just get it.*”

With this aspiration in mind, another interviewee shared that they would like to see parks renamed using Gunaikurnai language, or in some parks, suggested that campsites could be renamed in language. It was also suggested that Joint Management should support the implementation of more cultural spaces in the parks, similar to those in the Mitchell River National Park and Lake Tyers State Park. Several interviewees spoke to the value of having more Gunaikurnai people working in the parks, either as rangers or as administration staff, and how it can help build an awareness of the parks as being on Gunaikurnai Country. One interviewee expressed their appreciation for the Joint Management rangers:

“*When the Gunaikurnai rangers speak, kids listen, everyone loves it.*”

There was also a shared hope amongst PV interviewees that the changes in the broader context towards justice for Aboriginal Victorians would spark an acceleration of this improved understanding and deeper cultural change. As captured by this PV employee:

“*A big part of it is changing the way people think. This happens slowly. With Treaty, Yoorrook, I hope the speed of change will increase. We can embed these things on the horizon in our Joint Management narrative to help our people become early adopters of this way of thinking.*”

Department of Energy, Environment, and Climate Action

Consultations with DEECA were conducted online on 7 August 2023 in two groups: one focusing on regional implementation and the other on funding agreements.

Looking back – what has Joint Management achieved over the past 5 years?

The capabilities of the Gunaikurnai partners have greatly improved

All DEECA interviewees agreed that the capabilities of both GLaWAC and the GKTOLMB have improved substantially over the past 5 years, and that each organisation has gone through a journey of maturity. Interviewees referenced the voluntary administration of GLaWAC in 2017 and how, in their view, the GKTOLMB stepped up to fill that gap at the time. According to one DEECA interviewee:

“ Since that low point of being in administration with ORIC in 2017, the capability and capacity of GLaWAC has come forward in leaps and bounds in terms of its maturity, the ability to articulate requirements, and the ability to tap into different levels of governments.

Another interviewee shared:

“ GKTOLMB are our gold star TOLMB – and our relationship with GLaWAC has improved over time to become a real partnership.

However, it was also stated that GLaWAC are still quite a ‘skinny’ organisation on the ground, and as they expand their scope, they must continue to grow in size and capability. Interviewees recognised that it is part of DEECA’s role to support this trajectory of growth, especially through funding arrangements. It was shared that DEECA are attempting to initiate degrees of self-determination for Gunaikurnai partners by building in a level of flexibility to funding agreements. This has involved the modification of some funding agreements to have outcome targets rather than activities performed targets. As one DEECA interviewee shared:

“ For the first time we are providing funding on an ongoing multi-year basis for both GLaWAC and GKTOLMB for the implementation of the Joint Management Plan. . . we are trying to initiate degrees of self-determination as much as we can, for example, by shifting from funding agreements being about outcomes achieved rather than activities performed.

According to DEECA interviewees, multi-year, sustainable funding has allowed for more employment roles in the Gunaikurnai partners and improved, longer-term planning for projects and initiatives.

Looking back – where has Joint Management fallen short over the past 5 years?

Breakdown in Joint Management implementation due to barriers within government

There was a consensus within DEECA, that Joint Management has not yet transferred enough decision-making authority to the Gunaikurnai partners for Joint Management to be considered a truly shared partnership. Interviewees stated that there was still a reluctance within parts of DEECA to ‘let go’ and allow Traditional Owners to lead the care of their Country. Interviewees report that this is not only due to legislative and structural barriers but also the reality that some individuals continue to doubt the capability of the Gunaikurnai partners. These barriers have restricted the flow of greater resources, capability building opportunities and economic opportunities to Gunaikurnai partners. In the words of one DEECA interviewee:

“ We haven’t been able to transition decision-making authority to the Gunaikurnai, there is still a reluctance from us to let go and allow Traditional Owners more decision-making capacity. From that a lot of other things flow – resourcing, capability-building, economic opportunities. We haven’t been able to give them that seat at the table. There are people

still trying to hang on to decision-making authority, there are still trust issues. There is lots of good intent, but I’m not sure we have the governance structures set up to allow true Joint Management to exist, I’m not sure we communicate well enough across all of the agency, from where on-the-ground decisions are being made to the strategic space.

One interviewee shared their perspective that DEECA has a lot of good intent, but was not sure that it has the governance structures in place to allow for true Joint Management to exist. They stated that this intent is not always being translated to organisational action, whether it is on-the-ground work or in the strategic space, potentially due to a lack of necessary tools or governance structures. This interviewee also shared:

“ Individuals are doing great work, but the systems and corporate practice impede on the flexibility that is required in Joint Management.

Another interviewee commented that they have not witnessed big changes in the way that the parks are managed under Joint Management and would like to see Gunaikurnai cultural practices be brought into the parks in a more meaningful way. However, like many other DEECA interviewees, they recognised that this may require the breaking down of barriers within government partners to enable the implementation of different management practices. There is appetite to improve this aspect of DEECA’s role in Joint Management and many interviewees spoke to the need for meaningful organisational change – both structural and legislative.

Looking ahead – what matters most to you for the next 5 years?

Building the governance capabilities of Gunaikurnai people

DEECA interviewees identified that a continued focus on the building of governance capabilities for Gunaikurnai people, was a distinct priority for the next 5 years and beyond. Interviewees hope to see that more Gunaikurnai people are being included in Joint Management decision-

making processes, and more specifically, that Gunaikurnai people are employed in more senior leadership roles within the Joint Management partner organisations. As one DEECA interviewee explained:

“ We don’t just want another eight On Country rangers, we want more Gunaikurnai in senior positions within GLaWAC.

When prompted on the performance of the GLaWAC ranger crew, one interviewee shared their perspective that the implementation of an effective ranger team is difficult, and that you should not just expect it to work perfectly. They suggested that more manager level roles are required to support new and existing rangers. They also suggested that GLaWAC should encourage Joint Management rangers to engage in management meetings and continue to focus on building their capabilities in this space. However, another DEECA interviewee contended that more equitable sharing of decision-making for rangers is required for Gunaikurnai rangers to have the opportunity to build their governance capabilities.

More broadly, one DEECA member suggested changing Joint Management governance structures to ensure that GLaWAC and GKTOLMB can have their say, recognising the limited capacity for attending multiple meetings:

“ With RSA renegotiations going on, there are too many meetings with the same people, people stop showing up...The operations group has good intent, but it needs to get back on track, so that it can effectively feed into the Karobran Partnership Committee which is executive level...There’s a lot of overlap between Joint Management and RSA – perhaps we can use the same meetings to cover both?

Structural and legislative change in Joint Management partners

According to DEECA interviewees, the current activity and progress in the Indigenous self-determination space is driving a lot of system and legislative changes, and these are unlikely to slow down. There is hope for the future

that these changes will be realised within DEECA, PV, and other government departments, such as the Department of Premier and Cabinet. One interviewee shared their perspective that government partners should be more proactive in preparing the systems and legislation for when Gunaikurnai partner organisations are ready to take on more responsibility in land management. They stated their aspiration that:

“ *The reform of the Crown Land Act will provide more opportunity for Traditional Owners to be involved in direct or sole management...They will be fully empowered to manage land in their own right when they have the capacity and capability to do so. . . We want to have the systems and legislation in place on our side for when the Gunaikurnai are ready to move further in that direction.* ”

According to DEECA interviewees, there are now more staff than ever that appreciate Gunaikurnai culture and seem to understand what Joint Management truly means. However, as one DEECA interviewee reflected:

“ *I am still surprised when I come across people who don't know what Joint Management is or that Knob Reserve is Joint Management, or that new parks have been transferred over to Joint Management. There is still a communication or education issue.* ”

They went on to suggest that DEECA could be delivering improved communications about Joint Management so that this gap in understanding is avoided, especially considering the high turnover of staff.

DEECA interviewees also questioned the current Joint Management model and relationship between the GKTOLMB and GLaWAC. One interviewee explained that the GKTOLMB has the same statutory obligations as the PV board, but nowhere near the same capacity or capabilities – making statutory reporting a particularly onerous task for the GKTOLMB. However, it was raised that the Crown Land Act reform work will go some way in supporting the GKTOLMB to have less compliance requirements and more of an advisory body status. They also shared their perspective that a lot of funding seems to go towards supporting the operations of the GKTOLMB, which is very costly and funded from GLaWAC's resources. They suggested that funding could be better directed towards other Joint Management functions. Further amalgamation between the two Gunaikurnai partner organisations in time could reduce the double up of effort and free up funding.





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