

## HIGHLIGHTS OF ISSUE 41

- Learning, sharing and caring with the JM Rangers
- Big energy for the big yarns
- Erosion won't erase our ways





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# Elders Council

The GLaWAC Elders Council come together throughout the year to provide GLaWAC with advice on cultural matters, and to attend cultural events.

Members are appointed by the descendants of each identified Apical Ancestor each year directly before the Annual General Meeting. The members of the 2025 GLaWAC Elders Council are:

Aunty Lena Morris (Chair)

Aunty Beryl Booth

Aunty Bonnie O'Shanassy

Aunty Deanna Campbell

Uncle Ernie Harrison

Aunty Glenda Thorpe

Aunty Glenys Watts

Aunty Gwen Hudson

Aunty Julie Mongta

Uncle Kevin Murray

Aunty Lee-Anne Eddington

Aunty Lesa Arvidson

Aunty Marjorie Thorpe

Aunty Maria Harrison

Aunty Marianne Atkinson (Vice Chair)

Uncle Mitchell Booth

Aunty Noretta Knight

Aunty Raylene Young

Uncle Ricky Mullett &

Aunty Sandra Patten



# GLaWAC CEO update

Dear Members and Friends,

It's with a heavy heart that I write my final piece for GLaWAC News.

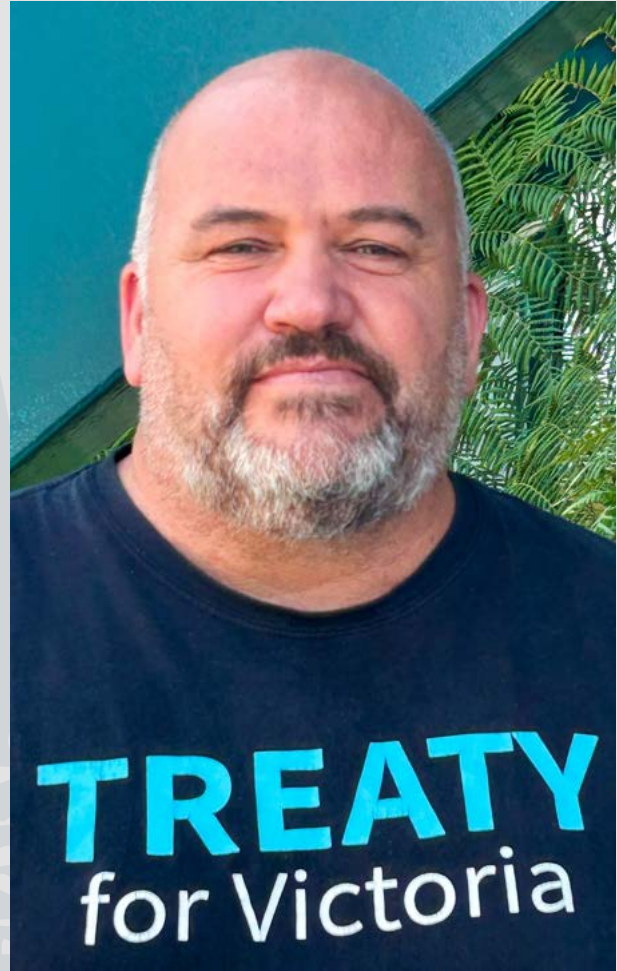
Whilst I'm looking forward to travelling around Australia and exploring our beautiful country, I'm equally saddened to be leaving GLaWAC and the Gunaikurnai people, all of which has made me feel so welcome for the past 8 years.

Since joining GLaWAC in 2017 I've experienced the many highs of working in a Traditional Owner Corporation, all of which relate to you as individuals and as a deadly Mob, all staff at GLaWAC and of course the GLaWAC Board and Elders Council. Together we have achieved so much, despite the constant challenges we all have in our lives. We have cared for each other, supported each other and never lost sight of how and why GLaWAC as a corporation exists.

There will always be challenges for our communities and our corporation, that's why working together is so important. In my short time here, we have sadly lost a number of staff, and the constant Sorry business in our Community takes an enormous toll on everyone.

Another challenge is within the bureaucracy in which we must work, where we are continually having to defend and justify our position as rights-holders. A challenge that we have always had, but one that I think the Gunaikurnai people face with incredible strength, dignity and purpose – we are making a difference and slowly seeing some change.

One thing I have always loved about our Aboriginal Cultures is that we are so family focused. I love how it is normal practice to ask after peoples family for those we know, or to ask where your family is from if we are meeting for the first time. I think this is very special and



always warms my heart. To me – you are all my family and forever will be.

It's been an honour and privilege to work with you all, to talk, to laugh, to celebrate and to comfort with you all.

**DANIEL MILLER**



# GKTOLMB Update

Every year the TOLM Board gets together with Joint Management (JM) partners to talk about how the work is going and what we need to do to improve. This year we gathered at Lakes Entrance and got some great yarns from our rangers and others involved in JM.

In December, we launched our plan for the things we are going to achieve in the next five years. It draws on what we heard from community, rangers and our JM partners about what has been good in JM and what still needs to be done. The plan has 10 objectives which are all about Gunaikurnai being the leaders in managing Country. There is a section for each of the objectives, talking about the things we are going to do in the Joint Management Plan (JMP) – at first in the new parks, and then updating the plans for the original 10 parks.

Before the workshop we also asked GLaWAC rangers about how joint management was going for them, what they liked about it and what they would do differently in the future. We did this on video which was played at the workshop. Everyone agreed it was a very powerful message for all of the JM partners to be reminded of the things we need to think about every day when working on Country.

**You can download and read The Next 5 Year's here:**

<https://bit.ly/3XEnJcK>

The Board is also starting to work on the JMPs for the four new parks – Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Reserve, Baw Baw National Park, Alpine National Park and the Avon Wilderness. We have started by hearing about the current challenges and opportunities for each park. As we found with the first 10 parks, there are a lot of things going on at the parks and a lot of work to be done to find, protect and restore the cultural heritage in each place.

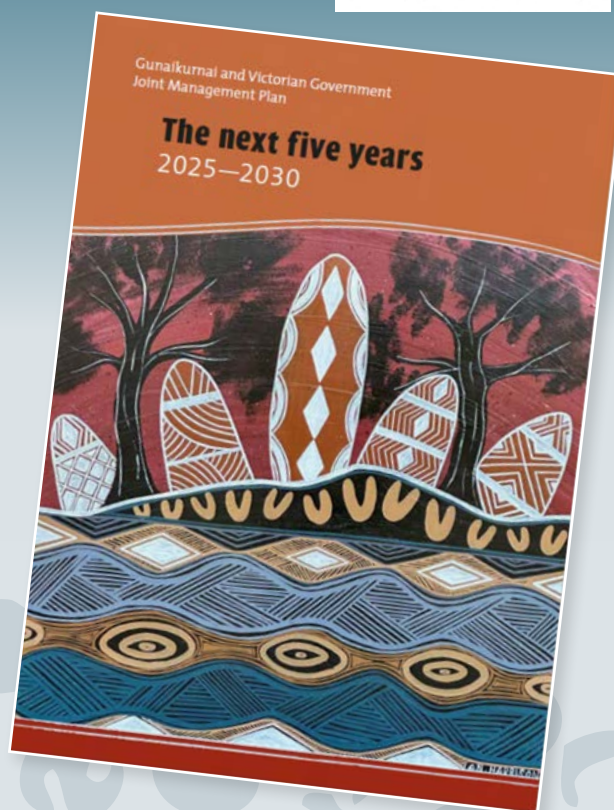
In the case of Nooramunga, the work will be closely related to the Sea Country plan that GLaWAC is already working on. At this stage we will treat the Alpine Parks as one plan covering the three parks. Our work will include a lot of talking with community about what you want to see in the plan – we will call out when and where this is happening.

Last – but certainly not least – there will soon be a chance to join the TOLMB and we are encouraging community who are interested in JM to let us know. The Board meet every second month, with a mix of on Country visits and indoor meetings. Terms are usually three years. The job of the Board is:

- To write JMPs, and to update existing plans when needed.
- To monitor performance and encourage compliance with the plans.
- To facilitate employment and economic development for Gunaikurnai.
- To comment and make submissions on things that affect JM parks.

## THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

Checkout the  
JM Rangers  
speaking for  
Country here:



The Board has two staff supporting its work, pays a sitting fee for each meeting, and must have a majority of Gunaikurnai members. If you are interested or want to know more, please contact GLaWAC or a Board member. With the recent addition of the new parks this is a great time to be involved with the TOLMB so please think about it and keep an eye out for the Expression of Interest that will start soon.

**Gunaikurnai TOLMB**



# Our Community



## An Update on the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria

In March, the Assembly met on Gunaikurnai Country in Traralgon to discuss ongoing Treaty negotiations.



In March, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria visited Country to discuss ongoing Treaty negotiations. It follows the deadly Treaty Day Out Gippsland back in February.

On the first day, Assembly Members travelled to Wulgunggo Ngalu, a learning place that means 'which way together' in Gunaikurnai language. We would like to say a special thank you to Aunty Sandra Neilson for the Welcome to Country and to Shaun Braybrook, and the men at Wulgunggo Ngalu for the deadly performance.

That evening, Assembly hosted a Community dinner for mob to come together for a feed and a yarn about Treaty with their elected Members.

The Elders Voice Standing Group held their own meeting in Traralgon before joining Assembly Members for the Cultural Day. During their meeting, Elders discussed a broad range of topics including how Sorry Business has been affecting our community.

The Elders reflected on the recent Traditional Owners Forum and Statewide Treaty Gathering held in



# Our Community



**Big thanks to everyone who came to celebrate Treaty Day Out Gippsland in Morwell in February.**

So good to see you mob having such a good time, despite the weather! A special thank you to all the artists, dancers, Elders, volunteers and crew for making this event possible.



Melbourne. They appreciated the information that was shared by the Assembly and were proud of the panel session they held.

*"We as Elders in our communities have influence, we have the power to influence our younger generations and inform them how Treaty will improve their lives"*

— the Elders' Voice members

Our journey to Treaty is a shared one, so make sure you get involved, get enrolled and join the conversation to stay up to date on future events and play a part of Treaty, a historic moment in this nation's history.

You can enrol here [firstpeoplesvic.org/enrol](https://firstpeoplesvic.org/enrol)

## Learn more about the Treaty process

It's exciting times ahead so make sure that you follow **Gippsland Aboriginal Network - Treaty For Victoria** on Facebook to stay up to date with all of the times and locations.

**With so much happening with Treaty, it's important to keep yourself in the know!**

Alice Pepper, South East elected rep and Treaty Youth Convener, is running monthly info sessions across Country to make sure our Elders and community have an opportunity to yarn about the matters that are important to them and learn more about the Treaty process.



# Our Community

## Lessons in language

Logan Hudson, a year 12 student at Bairnsdale Secondary College, has been teaching GunaiKurnai language to the Boorai at GEGAC's Dala Yooro Kindergarten.

Before colonisation, over 250 First Nations languages were spoken in Australia.

Now, just over 100 are still in use and 90 per cent are considered "endangered."

So these lessons are crucial to our people's culture for the future.

"The goal here is to revive the language," Logan says.

Logan has learnt language over the course of her life, through her family and Elders.

And so most of the resources Logan uses in the classroom are drawn from her own knowledge of what has been passed on through to her.

The way she likes to teach is to be more engaged and active with the kids.

For example, she might call out a colour in language, and tell the kids to go find that colour.

Or she will ask a question in an activity they are doing, and have the children say the answer in language.

Right now, the class is learning single words such as animals, objects and everyday kind of things.

Logan says she loves every bit of working with these young children.

"Seeing the kids' confidence in speaking their language means so much," she says.

"The goal for the future is for the kids to be able to say full sentences, and eventually bring them up so that when they get older they are in the position that I'm in now, passing on the language and teaching the future generations."

Getting to see these kids firsthand, and seeing them being taught by Logan, it is obvious that there is a real change going on in here.



These young Boorai are starting to replace English words with language in the sentences they use, such as animals and things they've been taught.

This is so inspiring to see a young Indigenous woman leading these kids and teaching through the passion and love she has for our culture.

Logan isn't certain yet what she wants to do after graduating from high school, although she knows she loves teaching kids culture like she is doing now.

I encourage all of you reading this that if you know of some words in language, start using them around home or around your children.

Small things like this can be pivotal in making sure culture and language is revived.

"Aboriginal culture is at the heart of everything we do at GEGAC," said GEGAC's Executive Director of Culture and Deputy CEO, Josh Tuiono.

"We have done a lot of work over the past year or so to make sure GEGAC is a place that always reflects and represents Aboriginal culture, right across the organisation."

"The Boorai and younger generations are an important part of that. Our investment in the cultural Room at Dala Yooro, the cultural workshops we've been doing, and bringing these language lessons into the Kindy, are just some of the things we've done to protect and promote Aboriginal culture at GEGAC."

By TROY BROWN



## Our Community

### Michael Takes His Shot - And Scores Big!

A huge shoutout to Michael Graham, who took his skills across the world on an unforgettable basketball tour of the USA! From hitting the court and competing overseas to watching NBA and college games up close, he made the absolute most of this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Michael's gratitude for the support from a community benefits grant that helped him get there is matched only by our pride in his achievements. These opportunities don't just create memories, they build confidence, open doors, and inspire the next generation.

We love seeing mob chasing their dreams, and Michael, you're doing just that. Keep ballin', keep shining, and keep making us proud!



### Googzy does the Great World Race

We are incredibly proud to give a huge shout-out to Andrew 'Googzy' Thorpe, a proud Gunnai Gunditjmara man, who made history back in December as the first Aboriginal Australian to complete the extraordinary Great World Race – running seven marathons on seven continents in seven days!

Googzy is now one of only 502 athletes over the past 18 years, including 48 men and women this year, to attempt seven 42.195 kilometres runs effectively every 24 hours.

From the icy winds of Antarctica to the heat of Miami, Andrew pushed through this monumental challenge to raise vital awareness and funds for mob's mental health through the Black Dog Institute's First Nations research, supporting suicide prevention and wellbeing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander men.

As Googzy said at the finish line "If I can do this, you can all do anything - you can survive it and be a survivor."

GLaWAC is proud to have been able to support, in even a small way, on this incredible journey. Congratulations Googzy, you're an inspiration to us all!



# Our Community

## Serving up culture

At the heart of The Bush Tucker Pantry is Louise Welsh's passion for bringing native Australian bush foods into the spotlight – introducing more people to the incredible flavours that have been part of Aboriginal culture for thousands of years.

Based in the Latrobe Valley, Louise is creating something special, a catering business that's not just about good food, but about sharing knowledge, sparking curiosity, and building respect for the ingredients that grow on Country.

With her deep commitment to preserving and celebrating Aboriginal culinary traditions, Louise is helping fill a real gap - offering people the chance to taste, learn, and experience the rich food culture that many have never had access to.

With a little support from our business development team, Louise is turning her vision into something bigger, creating opportunities to grow the business and keep bush foods on the menu at events, gatherings, and celebrations across the region.

It's about more than cooking. It's about reviving traditions, building pride, and proving that First Nations businesses can thrive by sharing culture in ways that are fresh, exciting, and deeply connected to Country.

And for Louise, this is just the beginning.



## YOUR COMMUNITY HUB

**Calling all Aboriginal community members!**

Our Morwell Community Hub is your space – a place to connect, collaborate, and create. Whether you're an artist wanting to showcase your work, an entrepreneur seeking office space, or a group needing a meeting spot, we've got you covered.

Our modern rooms can cater for individuals or groups of 4 to 20 people, perfect for workshops, events, or just a catch-up. Plus, our retail gallery proudly features Aboriginal-owned businesses, offering a platform to share your products with the wider community. Come be part of a vibrant centre that celebrates culture and fosters growth.

To book a space or learn more, visit our website or drop by at 235 Princes Drive, Morwell.





# Our Community

## A safe place for mob

It's vital that we have the right supports in place – ones that are designed by mob, for mob. Ones that can support our needs – physical, mental, emotional and cultural.

After the devastating 2019–2020 fires, Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust got a grant from Emergency Relief Victoria (ERV) to build a much-needed relief centre. This is an incredibly important project, and in January all the partner agencies were invited to check out its progress.

Well – it is looking mighty fine. And if all goes to plan it should soon be ready for the community to use. As Kerry Tregonning from the Trust said, "We now have something in place for the future of the community. Everything has been done according to our culture to make sure we are all safe in an emergency – health, mental health, culture, social connection, wellbeing."

"It gives us a good sense of pride, what we can do for our community, what we can do in a partnership."



Meanwhile, the community is getting together every Friday to talk about what they want to see on the massive mural that is planned to wrap around the whole building. It's going to draw on nature, the catchment, Dreamtime stories and depict the past, present and future. Looking good Lake Tyers!

"Partnership is the way to go. It doesn't work on your own. Working with GLAWAC, the Shire, ERV, East Gippsland Water - all the partners - you need all the support of a good team to make it happen."  
Kerry Tregonning





# Our Culture

## Cultural Hub Update

Welcome to 2025, as we see this year set to be another busy and exciting year for GLaWAC.

Firstly, we would like to extend our condolences and thoughts to all the families who have lost loved ones over recent weeks, as we pay our respects to you and your families.

We are in the planning phase of hosting a number of community events to be held this year and will endeavour to keep you posted through our social media platforms – so watch this space.

We look forward to collaborating and connecting more with community both in East Gippsland and Wellington and Latrobe areas to support community strengthening in events and social gatherings. This is what's important for our mob, staying connected.

Hope you enjoy the first edition of the GLaWAC newsletter for 2025. Take care and stay safe!

**Grattan Mullett**  
General Manager – Culture

## MEMBERSHIP UPDATE REMINDER

Hey there!

A quick note to check in – we'd love to make sure we have your latest contact details!

Keeping your info current means we can get important updates and newsletters to you without any hiccups.

If you need to update anything, just give us a call on (03) 5152 5100 or shoot us an email at [admin@glawac.com.au](mailto:admin@glawac.com.au).

Thanks so much for helping us stay connected!

## A Welcoming Culture

Culture is something we live, practice, and pass on every day. The Culture Hub team is out on Country, in schools, and at organisations, sharing Gunaikurnai culture through Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremonies, and cultural education sessions.

At Forestec and beyond, we welcome groups from all over, giving people the chance to experience culture firsthand. Whether it's through ceremony, storytelling, or hands-on learning, we're working to keep traditions strong and connections alive.





# Our Culture

## Girls on fire!

In March, a group of proud young Indigenous women came together in Rawson for an epic two-day adventure with GLaWAC's Girls on Fire program.

In a culturally strong and safe space, they took on new challenges, built confidence, and backed each other every step of the way.

They worked in teams, learning how fire moves and behaves, managing hoses and radios, and experiencing the excitement of riding in fire trucks and Unimogs. A highlight was working with SES rescue equipment, including cutting up a wrecked car (and keeping a piece as a memento!). Every moment was about pushing boundaries, growing leadership skills, and tackling tough situations with courage.

Surrounded by mob, they yarned, created art, and shared stories. They also connected with inspiring young women making their mark in firefighting, emergency services, and beyond – opening doors to future careers and new possibilities. By the end, plenty were thinking big and looking ahead to the bright futures that await them, proving that nothing can stop a young woman with a dream.

Big thanks to the Latrobe Valley community, Girls on Fire Australia, SES, CFA, FFMVic, Ambulance Victoria, NAB, and everyone who helped make it happen.





# Our Country



## Learning, Sharing, and Caring

The JM Rangers have been doing so much since we last checked in! Back in October, they hit the road to Echuca and Bendigo to meet up with Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta Rangers, hearing about how they work in Joint Management with Parks Victoria. It was a real eye-opener, and we all took a lot away from the experience.

"While we are all working in Joint Management with Parks Victoria, our relationships are all different. It was good for us to be able to chat with the Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung crews about their experiences and learn from each other." – Russell Dow

In December, some of our crew attended the Outdoor Education Conference. One of the highlights was meeting the Martu Rangers who hold Native Title over a large part of West Australia's desert country. They told us about how the Ranger Program has helped them reconnect with Country outside of the area where they usually live within their communities.

"The Martu Ranger program showed how strong the connection is with Rangers working on country and the benefits for not just the individual but also their family. The Martu are getting a chance to travel and share their story. I think this is what I liked the most about it. These communities are so isolated, and you don't get to see some of the work they do, so this is a great opportunity for us and them." – Russell Dow



# Our Country



Meanwhile, the Golden Beach Landscape Plan and platform are progressing, and we are busy repairing storm damaged infrastructure in the Tarra Bulga National Park and looking after campsites all over the place. We are also enjoying getting to know the Baw Baw National Park while completing site servicing and maintenance. We also visited the Barmah National Park, where we had the chance to see culturally significant sites and, in December, we rafted down the Mitchell River with PV, controlling oxeye daisy along the riverbanks. On top of that, we've kicked off blackberry weed control in the Mitchell River National Park at Angusvale.

Busy times, but all good work keeping us looking after Country!

**MICK FARNHAM & RUSSELL DOW, JM Managers**





# Our Country

## Protecting pygmy possums

With the Alpine National Park (on Gunaikurnai Country) now under joint management, we have new opportunities to walk Country and care for native critters.

Recently the JM Rangers were lucky enough to do just that as part of a project to support these endangered (and adorable) creatures.

The team worked with CESAR and the amazing ecologist and wildlife biologist Dean Heinze. A total legend!

Thanks to this project we've been able to get out to remote areas – walking, looking, listening and reading Country. Once we know what the situation is like on the ground, we can better support the Mountain Pygmy Possum and it's home.

Together we work to catch and tag the Pygmy possums, as well as collect DNA to monitor their health and genetic diversity. This helps us know how many pygmy possums are actually out there, and what other small creatures share their habitat. The team also checked out their food sources like the Bogong Moth, and their competitors like the native bush rat, to get a better understanding of the challenges the Pygmy possums face and how to manage them.

Beyond this, our crews have teamed up with Taungurung and Jaithmathang community members to track Bogong Moth populations across the broader alpine area. Using camera traps and shared knowledge, we've helped add valuable data to the population count. Sweet connections.





# Our Country



## Erosion can't erase us

Our coastline is changing. Rising sea levels, storms, and erosion are reshaping the land, sometimes taking with them the physical traces of where our Ancestors once stood. But just because the evidence is disappearing doesn't mean the stories are lost.

At St Margaret Island in Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park and Round Head in the Gippsland Lakes, we're working to piece together the past from what remains—not just from what we can see, but from the landscapes themselves. Even when shell middens and artefacts are no longer visible, the land holds traces of the Old People's presence—buried deep in the soil, in the layers of past burning, in the way the earth has shifted over time.

This work is being carried out through our partnership with Monash University, with JM Rangers, RAP crew and community members leading the way on Country. Their knowledge, combined with archival records and cutting-edge research, is helping to rebuild the story of these places, ensuring they are not forgotten.

Both sites are disappearing quickly, but at Round Head, where stabilisation works were completed in 2020, the point is already in need of further protection. Despite efforts to shore up the site, erosion continues to expose artefacts, making these further remedial works critically important.



From a cultural perspective, it's about more than conservation—it's about continuing the connection between people, place, and history. Every site carries the memory of those who came before, and by protecting these places, we keep that connection alive. What we lose to the water, we will not lose to time. These stories, these places, this knowledge—it remains. And we will continue to protect it.



# Our Country

## Plants, pollen and the past

Cloggs Cave is part of who we are. It holds the traces of our Old Ancestors - their lives, their knowledge, and their connection to this land. For tens of thousands of years, this place has been part of our story. Now, by studying something as small as pollen, we're uncovering how our people used plants and how the land around them changed.

Why is pollen so important? Pollen is the male part of flowering plants - tiny grains with a tough coating that can survive for thousands of years. Every type of plant has its own unique pollen, so when these grains settle into a landscape, they leave behind clues about what plants were growing there.

At places like Cloggs Cave, pollen does more than tell us about the environment. It can also show us how humans used plants long ago.

Working with our partners at the Centre for Indigenous Studies at Monash University, we've been looking at fossil pollen from sediments within the cave. We wanted to answer three questions:

1. What did the environment around Cloggs Cave look like in the past?
2. Could possums have brought pollen into the cave?
3. Did the Old Ancestors bring flowering plants into the cave for cultural or medicinal purposes?

The pollen gave us two important stories: one about how the Old Ancestors used plants and another about how the environment has changed over thousands of years.

The cave's narrow entrance makes it hard for pollen to drift in naturally on the wind, and tests showed that possums weren't responsible for bringing it inside either. So, how did the pollen get there? The evidence pointed to the Old Ancestors.

Some of the pollen was found in clumps, which is a clear sign that flowers or plant materials were carried into the cave. These weren't random plants, either. They included Banksia, tea tree, gum tree, and she-oak - plants known through Gunaikurnai knowledge to have cultural and medicinal importance.

This tells us the Old Ancestors were using Cloggs Cave as a special place. It wasn't just for shelter, it was a sacred space where mulla-mullung (learned men and women) practiced healing, magic, and ritual.

The pollen also revealed how the environment around the cave has changed over the past 25,000 years. During the Last Ice Age, the area was cooler and drier, with open grasslands and daisies dominating the landscape. As the ice melted and the climate warmed about 11,000 years ago, the land became a forested woodland, with gum trees and Banksia thriving in the area.

These environmental shifts would have shaped the plants available to the Old Ancestors and influenced the way they lived.

So, what comes next? The story of Cloggs Cave is still unfolding. We're now looking at tiny silica-based plant cells called phytoliths to dig even deeper into how the Old Ancestors used plants.

## Stories beneath the earth above

The Adelaide Fringe Festival is no stranger to big ideas and bold storytelling, but this year, something different took the stage. The Earth Above, the planetarium experience weaving together ancient knowledge, deep memory, and cutting-edge technology, drew a packed crowd of over 500 people—an audience eager to hear how these stories come to life.

Gunaikurnai knowledge was at the heart of the conversation. The mulla-mullung of Cloggs Cave—a story carried across Gunaikurnai Country last year—found new ground at Fringe, connecting past and present in ways that feel as immediate as ever. On stage, Uncle Russell Mullett, together with Bruno David from Monash University and the remarkable Pappin family from Mutthi Mutthi Country, shared the journey behind The Earth Above and what it means to take these stories beyond Country, into new spaces, and onto new platforms.

Of course, The Earth Above isn't just an experience. It's a meeting place—where songlines meet science, where history meets innovation. Supported by CABAH and brought to life through the Deakin Motion Lab, particularly the work of Nathan and Martin, the project is proof that our stories don't sit still. They evolve, they move, and they carry us forward.

That night in Adelaide, it wasn't just about looking up at the stars—it was about grounding ourselves in the knowledge that's been here all along. And if the energy in the room was anything to go by, this is only the beginning.



This work isn't just about science or research, it's about reconnecting with our Old Ancestors and the ways they lived. It's about understanding how they used the land and plants to care for themselves and their community. Every grain of pollen we find could hold another piece of the puzzle, another connection to our history and culture.

Cloggs Cave holds stories that stretch back thousands of years, and every day, we're learning more about the deep relationship between our people and Country. It's something to be proud of, and something worth sharing.



# Our Country

## Hot skills, cool burns

Our crews continue to put fire on Country to reconnect with our old ways of managing the land.

In Spring, our crew lit up a beautiful slow burn at the Knob Reserve, and another at Forestec. And in November, we headed back out to the Knob to see how the land had responded. It was a great day talking towera out there with our partners from the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, Bunurong Land Council, Taungurung Land and Waters Council, DEECA and PV.

When we use the right fire, at the right time, in the right place, we truly see what Country needs, and what Country gives. Observing

the animals, birds and insects, giving them plenty of time to move away, and then watching their return over days, weeks or months, reminds our people how to read and heal the landscape.

There's something powerful about watching the crews on the ground. Each burn connects us to the Ancestors while showing a path forward for the young ones that mixes traditional and contemporary knowledge.

These are our families, on our land, using our fire – exactly as it should be.



"I've enjoyed going out to different spots, different Country, and seeing what's there. You think you know what is out there but then you get a surprise - Hey! There's been a platypus here! That can be exciting." – Corey Jack



## Testing the waters

Our NRM crew have been getting out and about to test the waters – sampling and studying the eDNA in our waterways.

What is eDNA we hear you ask? Well, it's just DNA left behind by all the critters using the waterways.

It's amazing what it can tell us! It helps us know where some of our culturally significant species are using Country, as well as what introduced species are in the waterways. When we know where these pests are it helps us know how to manage the place better. This could be through an improved understanding of water health, implementing fox control to protect our native birds and small mammals, or fencing off areas to keep deer out of vulnerable places.

Since eDNA is a snapshot of what's in the water at any point in time, we test regularly. Corey and the crew are excited to be tracking seasonal changes in movement and breeding patterns, identifying what is, and isn't, around at different times of the year.



# Our Country

## Big effort, big impact

The NRM team have been keeping plenty busy, tackling everything from wetland restoration to fox baiting and revegetation projects—and all credit to the crews who are making it happen.

Over in the east, the team has been out at Jones Bay, planting 2,000 trees along the banks to stabilise erosion and restore wetland habitat. It's tough work, but every tree helps strengthen the landscape for the future.

Meanwhile, the NRM Valley crew has kicked off a massive 1080 fox baiting program across Holey Plains State Park, Mullungdung State Forest, and Won Wron Reserve. With over 400 bait stations spread strategically across the landscape, they're taking the fight right to these introduced predators that do so much damage to our native animals. The crew keeps a steady routine, replacing around 100 baits a day – no small task when active bait stations need to be a kilometre apart! Crew leader Michael Dalton-Welsh, along with Jake Atkinson and Michael Atkinson, have been absolutely smashing it – covering a huge area with serious skill and dedication.

On top of that, the Valley crew has teamed up with Loy Yang AGL, taking on revegetation, fencing, and site maintenance while building new skills on plant and machinery for future projects. There's plenty more on the go too, with work at Edward Hunter Reserve in Moe and even some projects in local primary schools, getting younger generations involved in caring for their own backyard.

Down at Balley Hooley, where the Snowy and Buchan rivers come together, we've just finished a beauty of an upgrade to the campground and day visitor area. Dougie and Chris Hood need a special shout out – they led the design to truly reflect our connection to Country. With a few final touches still to come, these works celebrate our culture while making the camping spot more welcoming for everyone.





# Our Country

Over at Spring Creek in Buchan Munji, we're fixing up the walking track that got smashed by the bushfires and floods. It's such a special spot with all those lyrebirds, wallabies and echidnas. We're rebuilding the bridge, viewing platform and stairs so everyone can enjoy it properly again.

The crew's been busy at Hoddinott Reserve in East Bairnsdale too, putting in new footpaths, tables and play equipment for the kids. With construction moving along nicely, the upgraded reserve is set for completion by mid-May. It's nearly time to set the kids loose in this deadly new playground!

And take a look at the work at the Snowy River Rail Trail Bridge! There's interpretive landscaping with artwork that helps share stories, plus a new car park which provides a stepping off point to explore the area.

The work is steady, the skills are growing, and it's great to see the team making a real impact on Country!



## Mineral Sand Mines opposition

In 2021, GLaWAC members clearly opposed the development of a mineral sands mine at the Fingerboards near Bairnsdale, reflecting the widespread lack of support across the region. You can find the submissions outlining these concerns at [www.gunaikurnai.org/our-community/policy-matters](http://www.gunaikurnai.org/our-community/policy-matters).

Gippsland Critical Minerals (formerly Kalbar) recently invited us to join their Community Reference Group. We declined, as our position remains unchanged. However, we acknowledge that some members may wish to engage

individually, and we encourage everyone to stay informed, as this project has generational impacts for Country and community.

GLaWAC remains committed to advocating for its members and the broader Aboriginal community. We are actively monitoring this development and will provide updates as needed.

To our members, we want to hear from you. Please reach out if you have questions or concerns or want to share your thoughts on this issue.



# Our Organisation

## Welcome Jemma

Wunman Njinde

My name is Jemma Wilkinson, and I am a proud 22-year-old Gunaikurnai and Wurundjeri woman. I grew up on Lake Tyers Aboriginal Trust before moving to Bairnsdale in 2016.

From a young age, my passion for culture and community has been a driving force. I joined in cultural activities, traditional dances, and community events with my mob, which gave me a deep appreciation for our traditions. Following a few years in mainstream jobs, I realised at 18 that my true calling was to work for Aboriginal organisations, allowing me to give back to my community.

I am proud to be a part of GLaWAC. This role helps me maintain a strong connection to Country and the rich history and unique culture of our people. I am committed to involving my people in the work I do here.

As I look to the future, I dream of seeing more young women like me working in Aboriginal organisations. It would be incredibly rewarding to see Koori faces in more professional positions, having a positive impact on our community. Knowing that younger generations are stepping up to contribute to our mob brings me immense joy and pride.

Thank you for allowing me to share my journey. I look forward to continuing this work as we strive to create a brighter future for our community.

**JEMMA WILKINSON**

Front Desk Administrator,  
Kalimna office



## WELCOME NEW STAFF

GLaWAC is growing, and there are plenty of new faces to spot at Forestec, Morwell, and out on Country—so if you see them around, give them a big welcome!

First up, **Heather Hood** has jumped into Economic Development as Eco Dev Support Officer, helping to open up new opportunities for mob in business and cultural tourism.

At the front desk in Kalimna, **Jemma Wilkinson** (pictured) is now running the show as Front Desk Administrator—the first friendly face you'll see when you drop into GLaWAC, the Bush Café, or the Aboriginal Art Gallery.

We've also got a brand-new Cultural Health and Wellbeing team, dedicated to keeping staff supported and ensuring culturally appropriate care is always at hand. Leading the charge are **Jamie Thomas** as Cultural Health and Wellbeing Coordinator and **Jo Blake** as Health and Wellbeing Manager—both here to look after the people who look after Country.

In HR, **Molly Ingram** is stepping in as HR Coordinator, making sure everything behind the scenes runs smoothly as our workforce keeps growing. Over in Communications, **Deb Milligan** is on board as Communications Manager, helping to share the stories and work of GLaWAC far and wide.

And finally, **Julie Dennison** takes on the role of Executive Assistant—On Country, making sure the right support is in place for the work ahead.

This crew is hitting the ground running, and we're stoked to have them on board as GLaWAC keeps growing and creating more opportunities for community. If you see them around, have a yarn and make them feel at home!

## No, Chloe and Kelvin haven't turned into mad scientists

—though they definitely looked the part! At GLaWAC, we're always exploring new opportunities, and the proof is in the pudding ... oops, we mean the picture.

More than a few laughs were had as they got hands-on with the idea of a circular economy, whipping up lotions using bush foods grown for the Bush Café by the awesome fellas out at Wulgunggo Ngalu. Who knows, maybe the next big skincare craze is brewing right here on Country!





# Our Organisation

## Strength in Skills

Big congratulations to Jake from the NRM crew in the Valley, and Grattan from the Culture Hub, who both completed their Certificate IV in Cultural Heritage Management late last year.

This is a huge step in ensuring the right people are leading the way in protecting and managing our cultural heritage on Country—keeping decision-making in our hands and strengthening cultural knowledge for future generations.

A big shoutout as well to Russell Dow for completing the Diploma of Leadership and Management at TAFE Gippsland and to Willow Carter for graduating from the Gippsland Community Leadership Program. These programs are all about providing new opportunities for growth and building strong connections—setting mob up for success in business, community, and beyond.

Out on the water, Cath and Tyrone are doing their Coxswain Grade 1 course, mastering vessel operations, navigation, and emergency procedures—essential skills for working on Country.

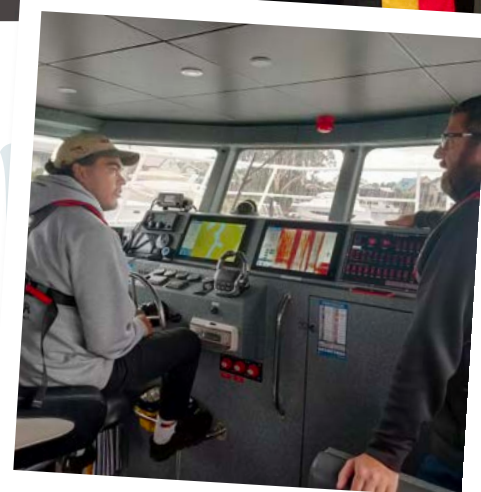
And the learning doesn't stop there—six staff completed pest animal control training in December, and ten more achieved First Aid certification in February.

Looking forward, Heather, Chloe, and Cath have kicked off their Ken Hore Tourism Mentorship, connecting with industry leaders and building pathways into Gippsland's growing tourism sector.

All up, it's a massive testament to the dedication of our mob, investing in skills, knowledge, and leadership. The stronger we are, the bigger the opportunities.

"It's hard to put into words - I'd encourage anyone and everyone to do it because it's amazing. It takes leadership to a whole new level, opening up so much learning -including about yourself. But for me, the biggest highlight was the networks. Next week, I'm teaming up with three fellow alumni to help coordinate the Girls on Fire program, and that just shows the power of those connections."

Willow Carter



## A seat at the table

**GLaWAC is working hard to ensure your voice, rights and aspirations are front and centre of the offshore wind industry development in Gippsland.**

A critical step in this journey is securing engagement agreements with proponents that ensure Gunaikurnai people are actively involved in discussions about the feasibility of the projects.

**Our role is to protect Gunaikurnai rights and values while also exploring opportunities that could bring long-term benefits, should the project proceed. Ensuring we have a voice at the table is the first step.**

We've got four engagement agreements so far - with Iberdrola Australia, Parkwind, Orsted and Southerly Ten. It's about setting a standard for how offshore windfarm developers should engage with Traditional Owners, and demonstrating the value of

meaningful partnerships based on respect and shared outcomes.

This isn't about us agreeing to these projects without talking to you mob first. GLaWAC remains committed to transparency and will keep members informed as discussions progress. Should projects move beyond feasibility, GLaWAC will work to ensure any future development respects Gunaikurnai Country and delivers meaningful benefits for members and the broader community.

With 12 feasibility licences currently issued to 10 companies, we're working hard to ensure GLaWAC is equipped to advocate for the Gunaikurnai community's rights, values, and aspirations across all projects.



# Our Economy

## Unlocking Careers in Cultural Tourism

There's enormous potential for Gunaikurnai cultural tourism—creating meaningful employment and strengthening culture on Country.

GLaWAC's tourism team has been hard at work laying the foundations for sustainable, community-led experiences that connect visitors with the depth and beauty of Gunaikurnai knowledge. This isn't just about creating tours; it's about bringing mob on the journey - building skills, confidence, and opportunities to share culture in powerful and authentic ways.

At the heart of this work, we're developing a Gunaikurnai Cultural Tourism Strategy, to shape how we grow tourism across Country, ensuring it's done the right way, with community at the centre. From workshops to a business study tour, tour guide training, and more, we want to create real pathways for mob to lead and share our culture with the world.

If you've got ideas or want to get involved in tourism on Country, we'd love to hear from you get in touch with GLaWAC's tourism team to be part of the journey.

With strong support from Destination Gippsland, Visit Victoria, and Tourism Australia, the future of cultural tourism on Gunaikurnai Country is bright. And we're just getting started.





# Our Economy

## Deadly in Gippsland

From artists and tradies to bushfood growers and traffic controllers, First Nations businesses are driving change and creating opportunities across the region, building strong futures for themselves, their families, and their communities.

At last year's Deadly in Gippsland First Nations Business Expo in Moe, that power was on full display. More than 30 Aboriginal businesses came together to showcase their work, make new connections, and back each other in.

To every business who showed up, shared their journey, and put their skills on display—what a testament to your drive, dedication, and deadly talent. You're not just contributing to the local economy, you're reshaping it.

To all the individuals and organisations who helped make the event the success it was, we see you and we couldn't be more grateful to have you in our corner.

Because the impact goes beyond sales and contracts. Events like these prove what's possible: real pathways for mob to launch and grow businesses, stronger networks across industries, and a future where Aboriginal businesses are the first choice for buyers.

With more opportunities opening up across Country, the goal is clear: when new projects arise, First Nations businesses are ready to lead the way.

For buyers, that means checking the directory and making the call. For mob thinking about starting something of their own, now's the time.

The momentum is here. And it's only getting stronger.





# Our Economy

## From the ground up

It started with a simple idea—getting mob together to grow traditional bush foods and botanicals. Four years later, the Bush Foods Program has brought over 100 people into the fold, not just planting and harvesting, but learning, sharing knowledge, cooking, and having a good laugh along the way.

It's about more than plants, it's about people. From the fellas at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place to young ones keen to try something new, everyone who gets involved walks away with new skills, connections, and a stronger sense of culture. Alongside partners like Federation Vic, Agriculture Victoria, and TAFE Gippsland, we're creating real pathways - whether it's growing, harvesting, cooking, or selling bush foods.

And the best part? Work doesn't stop here. In 2025, we're going bigger—expanding hands-on training in commercial harvesting, packaging, and retail. Our very own Bush Spices will soon be hitting the shelves at The Bush Café and beyond, giving more people the chance to taste the flavours of Country.

It's for community, by community. Want to get involved? There's always a spot at the table.





# Our Economy

## Big Yarns, Big Energy

The GLaWAC Energy team has been out and about, catching up with mob across Victoria, and we've had some deadly conversations along the way. From sports carnivals in Bendigo and Portarlington to Treaty Day Out in Morwell, it's been all about hearing what's important to you—and having a bit of fun while we're at it!

The photo booth has been a hit, and we've been hearing that our photo postcards have found their way onto fridges, desks, and bedroom walls all over the State.

It's been great to see these conversations flowing. In February, mob came together for our first off-Country yarning session in Melbourne, sharing ideas, experiences, and big-picture thinking on business, cultural tourism, energy transition, and what a strong future—shaped by Gunaikurnai people—looks like.

These yarns are just the beginning. We're planning more sessions on and off Country throughout the year, and we'd love to see you there. Keep an eye on our socials and website for upcoming events, or better yet, let us know if you'd like to organise one in your area! You can also join our mailing list to stay in the loop with everything happening at GLaWAC.

Because the best ideas come from listening, sharing, and having a good yarn together, and we're here for it.





## **Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC)**

Under the guidance of the Board of Directors and Elders Council, GLaWAC is the Registered Aboriginal Party that represents the Gunaikurnai people and their aspirations for Native Title, cultural heritage, land, water and natural resource management.

## **GLaWAC News content disclaimer**

Opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation. We do not guarantee the accuracy or accept any responsibility for the statements or comments made by the contributors in articles submitted. GLaWAC reserves the right to amend, alter or delete any items, statements or articles that it feels is not in the best interest of the Corporation or its members.

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# GLaWAC News