

Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

GLaWAC Energy Strategy



WE HONOUR OUR ANCESTORS AND ELDERS WHO HAVE ALWAYS CARED FOR GUNAIKURNAI COUNTRY AND WHO GUIDE US STILL. THEIR STRENGTH, STORIES AND CULTURAL KNOWLEDGE SIT AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO.

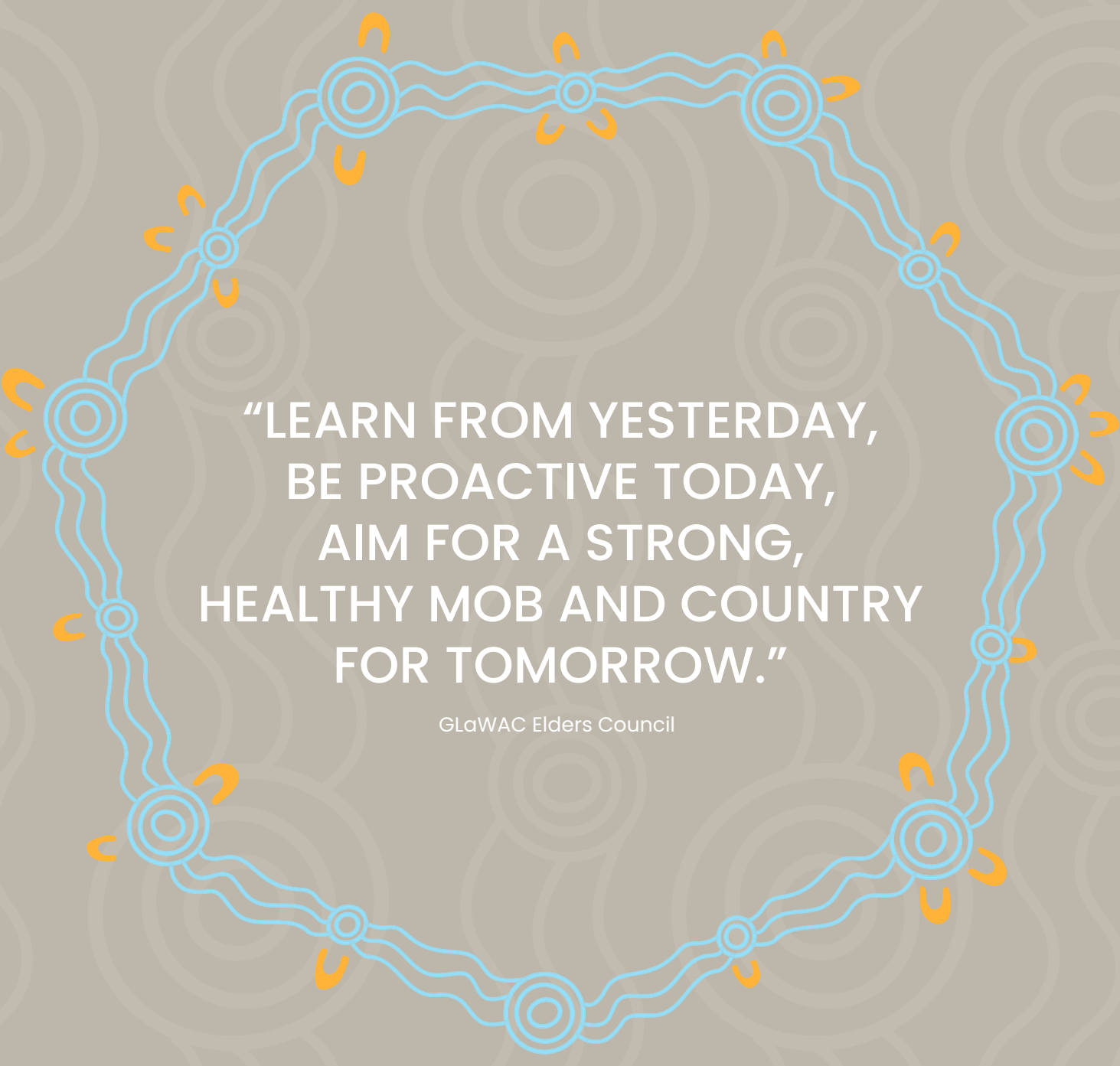
AS THE RECOGNISED TRADITIONAL OWNERS AND CUSTODIANS OF COUNTRY ACROSS GIPPSLAND, WE CARRY THE RESPONSIBILITIES HANDED DOWN THROUGH OUR FIVE CLANS: BRABRALUNG, BRATAUALUNG, BRAYAKAULUNG, KRAUATUNGALUNG AND TATUNGALUNG. OUR PEOPLE HAVE ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD THE WINDS, TIDES, WATERS AND FIRE THAT SHAPE THIS PLACE. THESE LIVING ENERGY SYSTEMS HAVE SUSTAINED US FOR COUNTLESS GENERATIONS.

THIS STRATEGY HONOURS THAT UNBROKEN CONNECTION AND ASSERTS OUR ROLE IN LEADING DECISIONS ABOUT ENERGY ON GUNAIKURNAI COUNTRY.

YESTERDAY, TODAY AND TOMORROW.

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**“LEARN FROM YESTERDAY,
BE PROACTIVE TODAY,
AIM FOR A STRONG,
HEALTHY MOB AND COUNTRY
FOR TOMORROW.”**

GLaWAC Elders Council



The message from our Elders

The GLaWAC Elders Council reflect that Gunaikurnai people have been promised great things from industry before, notably the coal industry in the Latrobe Valley.

But those promises were never fully realised and our people have found themselves no better off. In the case of the coal industry, large scars in the landscape will take Gunaikurnai resources, such as water to heal or manage forever.

Fossil fuel energy has made Wurruk (land) sick, and the journey to healing is just beginning. The next phase of energy generation on Country will be guided by the wisdom passed from our Ancestors, to our Elders, to our community.

With the transition to new energy that's coming to Gippsland, there will be a lot of opportunities coming for our mob. But the new energy projects are also going to have an impact on our landscape – and we will need to make sure that our cultural heritage is protected when they start building solar and wind projects.

As the representative of Gunaikurnai Traditional Owners, GLaWAC will negotiate with industry to get good outcomes for our mob – we want to see more jobs, training pathways, ongoing revenue, and business opportunities. We want to see Country respected and protected.

We also want to help our families lower their energy bills. Energy prices are sky-high: many families can't afford the bills, so they can't pay for food. A lot of them are seeing that renewable energy is a lot cheaper – and they want to benefit from that.

We must be at the table from the beginning, not the end. Our cultural heritage, our rights and our responsibilities must be respected every step of the way.







Introduction

Gunaikurnai Country has powered Victoria for more than a century, but our people have seen little benefit and have carried many of the impacts. As coal, gas and old energy infrastructure are decommissioned, a new wave of energy development is emerging across Gippsland. This includes offshore wind, onshore wind, solar, batteries, transmission lines and other technologies.

These changes bring risks and responsibilities, but also important opportunities.

The Gunaikurnai Whole of Country Plan recognises that “the economy of our region is largely driven by energy, particularly offshore gas and oil, and brown coal”. Over the next decade, oil, gas and coal assets will be decommissioned and complex remediation of Country will be required.

Energy will continue to be a major driver of Gippsland’s economy. New energy infrastructure will be developed to replace the fossil fuel industry.

GLaWAC has a duty to protect and heal Country, safeguard cultural heritage, uphold our rights as Traditional Owners, and secure opportunities for our community. This strategy provides the direction for our work through the energy transition. It outlines our priorities, our objectives, and the standards we expect government and industry to meet.

What is Country

Our Country is the land, the rivers, the ocean and the sky,
the people and the stories, the past and the future.
All of it is connected. All of it matters.

Our wurruk (land) , yarnda (waters), watpootjan (air) and every
living thing are bound to our people through law and custom.
Country is not just what we see on the surface
it includes the ancient lands beneath the sea.

Before the waters rose, the Bassian Plain stretched
between Victoria and Tasmania. Our Ancestors walked,
gathered and cared for Country. Today, those same cultural
landscapes lie beneath the ocean, forming the seascapes
and ecosystems we now call Sea Country.

Throughout this strategy, the word Country refers to land, sky
and Sea Country together. All are Gunaikurnai Country.
All fall within our rights, responsibilities and decision-making

What this strategy means for Gunaikurnai community

The energy industry across Gippsland is changing fast. New wind farms, transmission lines and technologies will shape our region for generations.

For Gunaikurnai community, this means:



More opportunities for jobs, training and business.



Stronger protection for cultural heritage and Country.



The chance to remedy places damaged by old energy systems.



Support for families to navigate changing energy costs and technologies.



Greater authority in how projects are planned and approved.



Fair benefits from projects happening on our Country.

This strategy is our plan to make sure the energy transition works for Gunaikurnai people - not against us.



Purpose of this strategy

This strategy sets the direction for GLaWAC's role in the new energy transition. It outlines the objectives we are working to achieve, and the standards we expect from government, industry and other partners as they operate on Gunaikurnai Country.

The strategy seeks to realise the economic opportunities arising from the energy transition, helping us manage the risks and responsibilities arising from the development of these projects on Country.

This will help realise the foundational goals detailed in the Gunaikurnai Whole of Country Plan, and aligns with the organisational focus area and actions set out in the GLaWAC Strategic Plan 2023-2033.

The energy transition on Country

Country has been the centre of Victoria's energy economy for more than a century. As the shift to renewable energy takes off, Country continues to be front and centre of the journey.

The transition to renewable energy is an important one and will reduce the effects of climate change. Climate change is bringing changes to Country and culture, particularly along our coasts, through extreme weather.

At the same time, the transition brings opportunities for our community. Historically, the energy sector in Gippsland has taken irreplaceable cultural heritage from Gunaikurnai and impacted our connection to Country, most notably through the gas pipeline project and coal fired power.

Gunaikurnai have received little in return to remedy the impact on Country or our people.

GLaWAC has a crucial role during this energy transition to oversee the protection and healing of Country and to make sure that economic opportunities are available to our mob for generations to come. Now, GLaWAC has the opportunity to set a high standard for how First Peoples' participate in, and benefit from, the renewable energy transition taking place across Australia.

This strategy lays the foundations for achieving a better future for Gunaikurnai community by securing rights and benefits through the new energy transition.

We will know we have succeeded when:

- Gunaikurnai rights and interests are at the forefront of the renewable energy transition in Gippsland.
- Gunaikurnai community have access to affordable, reliable, and clean energy that keeps families comfortable and safe from the risks of a changing climate.
- Gunaikurnai exercise their right to Free Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) on renewable energy projects on Country.
- The renewable energy transition significantly contributes to the economic independence of Gunaikurnai community and GLaWAC.
- Gunaikurnai community share in the economic prosperity generated through employment, training, and business development opportunities.
- Country is healed and protected, and our cultural heritage is safeguarded through the renewable energy transition.
- The strength, health and wellbeing of Gunaikurnai mob is uplifted through the benefits flowing from economic development, energy security, and stronger connections to culture, Country and community.

Strategic priorities

Economic Development

We will champion opportunities for Gunaikurnai people and businesses to participate.

Partnerships

We will establish strong, accountable partnerships that uphold Gunaikurnai rights and ensure decisions about energy projects respect cultural authority.

Community Benefits

We will secure resources through energy projects to advance community priorities and strengthen Gunaikurnai self-determination.

Household Energy

We will help Gunaikurnai households navigate the changing energy system by improving access to clear information, practical support and fair opportunities.

Healing Country

We will protect and care for Country by guiding how energy projects identify, avoid and minimise cultural and environmental harm.

Our expectations of Industry and Government

- Partner with GLaWAC through formal agreements that share the economic benefits of energy projects with the Gunaikurnai community.
- Collaborate with GLaWAC to protect and heal Country through studying, monitoring, and mitigating impacts to landscapes, seascapes, ecosystems, and plant and animal life.
- Work with GLaWAC to understand, protect, manage and share information on cultural heritage (including submerged cultural heritage) by exceeding minimum legislative requirements, particularly in areas of high cultural significance or critical at-risk.
- Involve GLaWAC as a rights holder in planning, approval and decision-making processes (including EIS, TRG and project design), respecting the Gunaikurnai community's own decision making processes and timeframes.
- Support Aboriginal economic development by implementing best-practice First Nations employment, training, and procurement strategies.
- Provide a culturally safe space for GLaWAC staff and Gunaikurnai community to participate.

Building strong partnerships

Recognising that strong partnerships will be critical to realising the objectives of this Strategy, GLaWAC has developed initial relationships with government and industry in anticipation of further engagement, consultation and negotiation.

Our goal is to sign agreements and partnerships that secure Gunaikurnai rights and benefits through the energy transition, as detailed in 'Our objectives'.

Partnering with offshore wind to create economic opportunities

We're building the foundations of partnerships with offshore wind proponents. An engagement agreement between GLaWAC and Iberdrola Australia for their Aurora Green project is the first agreement signed with proponents in accordance with our Pathways to Partnership model.

Southerly Ten, JERA Nex, and Orsted have also signed project engagement agreements, committing to working closely to ensure the rights, values, and priorities of Gunaikurnai are respected.

Engagement agreements like these will resource GLaWAC for ongoing engagement and negotiation, with a focus on creating meaningful outcomes for our community. GLaWAC is seeking further engagement and project agreements with energy projects across Country.



"Working in the renewables sector has allowed my family and I to enjoy a life full of adventures and quality time together whilst securing our financial future."

"With the industry being relatively new in Australia there are lots of exciting opportunities for our mob now and for future generations learning, protecting and working on country and being part of an environmentally sustainable future."

Peter McGregor, Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner

How can GLaWAC shape the energy transition

The scale of new energy proposals on Country have increased dramatically in recent years, particularly with projected offshore wind energy developments. GLaWAC has needed to rapidly build capacity, relationships, and partnerships.

Our Rights, Responsibilities & Authority on Country

As the Registered Aboriginal Party and Prescribed Body Corporate for Gunaikurnai, GLaWAC has clear responsibilities and authority in matters that affect Country.

Our rights are recognised through:

- Native Title Determination.
- Traditional Owner Settlement Act.
- Aboriginal Heritage Act.
- International standards, including Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC).

Free, Prior and Informed Consent:

FPIC means Gunaikurnai people have the right to:

- Receive full information about proposed projects.
- Be engaged early, respectfully and without pressure.
- Make decisions through our own cultural governance.
- Give - or withhold - consent to activities affecting our Country.

FPIC is not consultation. It is a right.

Our responsibilities

GLaWAC hold cultural responsibilities to:

- Speak for Country.
- Protect cultural heritage.
- Care for our land, water and sky.
- Guide development so it does not harm our cultural landscapes.

Government and industry must respect and uphold these rights and responsibilities in all dealings on Gunaikurnai Country.

Asserting our rights

In late 2022, GLaWAC released a Position Statement to the Commonwealth Government on offshore wind, *Submission for offshore renewable energy infrastructure area proposal: Bass Strait off Gippsland*, that documented some of the opportunities and concerns GLaWAC saw in the offshore wind sector.

The Position Statement highlighted that the declared offshore wind area borders on land and waters to which the Gunaikurnai people hold Native Title and with which the State of Victoria have entered into agreements under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010.

This formal recognition of Gunaikurnai connection to Country means that any development undertaken in the offshore and onshore renewable energy zones must seek to respect our rights and responsibilities as custodians of these lands.

The proposed area also takes in the seabed of Bass Strait, formerly the Bassian Plain. This area was occupied by our Ancestors for thousands of generations, utilising the abundance of resources until sea levels rose after the end of the Last Ice Age.

Our cultural connection to Country, and the likelihood of discovering both submerged and onshore sites of cultural significance, means that full cultural surveys and Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) need to be undertaken to protect Gunaikurnai cultural heritage.

Putting forward our aspirations

GLaWAC is putting forward our aspirations to companies seeking to build new energy projects in Gippsland.

In our statement to industry, *Pathways to Partnership - Gunaikurnai and Major Projects*, we outline what meaningful agreement making with GLaWAC looks like, including:

- Compensation for use of traditional land and waters
- Land transfers and returns
- Cultural heritage protections
- Caring for Country (land and sea)
- Research programs
- Cultural awareness
- Employment and training opportunities
- Social procurement
- Monitoring and evaluation

Looking to future opportunities

For our people, energy means opportunity. Opportunity for community to live strong, happy and healthy lives, for businesses and mob to play a crucial role in the development of new energy. GLaWAC see an opportunity to capture generational benefits from the finalisation of old energy, and for all energy activities across Country to respect Gunaikurnai as Traditional Owners.

This will ensure that the energy sector fosters learning, relationships, economic development, health, unity, employment, and healing. In the coming years our engagement and lasting partnerships will shape a better future for Gunaikurnai.

Preparing to heal Country

Decommissioning of energy infrastructure that has occupied Country for decades is already taking place.

The Hazelwood power station closed in 2017. Offshore oil and gas will be decommissioned over the coming decades, with Yallourn power station set to close in 2028 and Loy Yang A scheduled in 2035.

In 2020, GLaWAC published our submission to the Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy. In 2025, GLaWAC released our Healing Wurruk After Coal Position Statement, outlining Gunaikurnai expectations for the Latrobe Valley coal mine closures.

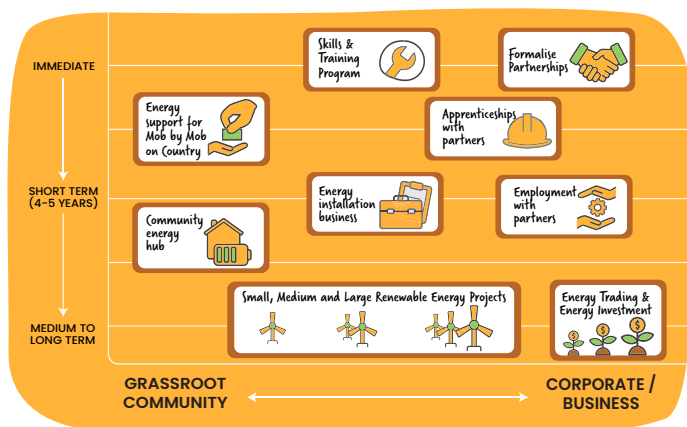


Figure 1 - demonstrates the employment, education and training opportunities for Gunaikurnai people identified in a 2022 feasibility assessment of GLaWAC's direct participation in the energy sector.

Our objectives

These objectives are guided by the Gunaikurnai Whole of Country Plan and reflect GLaWAC's intentions and aspirations regarding the renewable energy transition. Additional objectives are likely to be identified as the journey progresses.

To have a Strong Happy Mob

- The Gunaikurnai community has the information they need to understand the transition and can make informed decisions about seeking opportunities presented by it.
- The Gunaikurnai community inform and guide GLaWAC decision making regarding new energy transition.

To be respected as Traditional Owners of our Country

- GLaWAC and the Gunaikurnai Community are embedded in processes that relate to the management of Country including in Environment Effects Statements, Technical Reference Groups and other relevant processes.

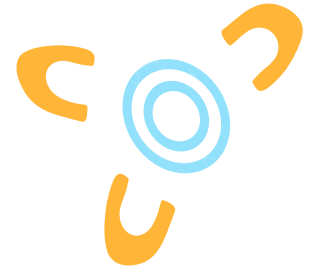
To have the right to use, manage and control our Country

- Gunaikurnai rights to access Country and use our natural resources are not impacted by the energy transition and the formal processes that protect our rights, such as Native Title, are adhered to.

To heal our Country

- Through GLaWAC, opportunities for Gunaikurnai to protect and heal our living cultural landscapes are investigated and implemented.
- Impact, including cumulative impact, from new energy is accounted for when assessment processes are implemented.
- GLaWAC directs development and delivery of landscape remediation requirements for damage to environments and cultural sites.
- Gunaikurnai collaborate in monitoring and protecting biodiversity impacted by development and have access to that data.
- Emerging technologies with lower environmental and visual impact are a part of the energy transition.
- Decommissioning plans are adequate and rehabilitation bonds are required up front.





To Protect and Practice our Culture

- Gunaikurnai tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage is protected and GLaWAC is resourced to effectively manage Cultural Heritage through the energy transition.

- Our most critical cultural heritage sites, especially our Ancestors' resting places, are
- protected from any harm. Government and Industry will undertake measures to protect these sites where further opportunities exist.

- Gunaikurnai are compensated for the loss of
- our cultural heritage when it is irreparably lost or damaged from development/works.

- GLaWAC are involved in submerged Aboriginal cultural heritage management including its
- surveying, documentation, research potential and protection, respecting Indigenous Data Sovereignty.

- Submerged Aboriginal Cultural Heritage is appropriately managed through legislation.

To be economically independent

- Ongoing revenue is provided to GLaWAC in trust for Gunaikurnai community.

- GLaWAC realise economic investment and passive income opportunities, which may
- include ownership, investment or leasing associated with new energy infrastructure.

- Grow GLaWAC business – GLaWAC is
- contracted to deliver works consistent with existing service offerings, and explore new ones.

- Aboriginal businesses are empowered to
- respond to opportunities presented by the energy transition.

- The transition creates jobs for Gunaikurnai
- people, with focused initiatives to achieve this, guided by GLaWAC.

A strong focus on learning

- Gunaikurnai community are empowered to
- lead GLaWAC's involvement in the energy transition.

- Gunaikurnai learn from, and share knowledge, with other First Peoples.

Measures of success for Gunaikurnai

The following outlines how we plan to measure the success of our strategic objectives.

Strategic priorities	Description	Measures of success for Gunaikurnai mob	We will know we have succeeded when:
Healing Country	We will protect and care for Country by guiding how energy projects identify, avoid and minimise cultural and environmental harm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proportion of GLaWAC cultural heritage recommendations adopted by proponents. Significant places protected, avoided, or safeguarded as a result of GLaWAC advice. Changes in Country condition recorded through on-Country monitoring where baseline data exists. 	Cultural heritage and priority landscapes are protected, and Gunaikurnai leadership shapes all decisions affecting Country.
Community Benefits	We will secure resources through energy projects to advance community priorities and strengthen Gunaikurnai self-determination.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growth in long-term income streams that strengthen Gunaikurnai sovereign wealth. Revenue secured from energy projects for self determined priorities. Investment directed to Gunaikurnai-led programs, services or cultural initiatives. Community priorities reflected in GLaWAC's final positions on energy projects. 	The energy transition delivers real, lasting benefits for GLaWAC, Gunaikurnai families and community, strengthening wellbeing, capability and the resources needed to care for Country.
Economic Development	We will champion opportunities for Gunaikurnai people and businesses to participate in the energy economy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gunaikurnai employment secured through energy project opportunities. Training and skills programs delivered with Gunaikurnai participation. Contracts and procurement opportunities awarded to Gunaikurnai businesses. Growth in long-term career pathways for Gunaikurnai in the energy sector. 	Gunaikurnai are actively participating in the energy transition, securing meaningful jobs, training, and enterprise opportunities.
Partnerships	We will establish strong, accountable partnerships that uphold Gunaikurnai rights and ensure decisions about energy projects respect cultural authority.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finalised partnership agreements that recognise and uphold Gunaikurnai rights. Delivery of commitments made in agreements (tracked through partnership reporting). FPIC processes undertaken and documented for relevant projects. Partnerships enable ongoing cultural, environmental or research outcomes for Gunaikurnai. 	Gunaikurnai rights and authority are respected through accountable partnerships that uphold FPIC and deliver meaningful outcomes for Country and community.
Household Energy	We will help Gunaikurnai households navigate the changing energy system by improving access to clear information, practical support and fair opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs or pilots delivered with Gunaikurnai household participation. Number of households supported through information sessions, assessments or referrals. Funding or resources secured to strengthen household energy resilience. 	Gunaikurnai families are better equipped to make informed energy decisions and access support that improves comfort, safety and resilience.

Related documents

- Gunaikurnai Whole of Country Plan
- GLaWAC Strategic Plan 2023-2033
- Pathways to Partnership – Gunaikurnai and Major Projects
- GLaWAC Submission for Offshore Renewable Energy Infrastructure Area Proposal Position Statement
- GLaWAC Submission for Latrobe Valley Regional Rehabilitation Strategy
- Healing Wurruk After Coal Position Statement
- Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy Gippsland
- Healing Katungal After Offshore Oil And Gas Position Statement
- Gunaikurnai and Offshore Energy: Aspirations For A Better Future





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