

Highlights of Issue 44

- All the photos from NAIDOC Day
- Where the wild eels go
- Grinding stones on display



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Update from GLaWAC's CEO

Hello members and community.

You hold in your hands a collection of stories about the work that GLaWAC and other local Aboriginal organisations are doing across Country.

Like the landscape itself, this work is varied, always changing, and vital.

As Traditional Owners and members of GLaWAC, this work happens on your behalf.

And so it is important to me and everyone at GLaWAC that you feel you have all the information you need about these projects, and any other work we are doing.

If you have any questions, ideas, or comments good or bad, please reach out to us.

You can email comms@glawac.com.au or call the admin team on (03) 5152 5100 and they will deliver your message.

We are always looking to improve how we provide information to community and to create more opportunities for yarning and sharing.

And so that's one of the conversations our leaders are having at the moment – what effective and culturally appropriate

engagement with community must look like now and into the future, and how to make that consistent and sustainable.

If you've got ideas about this, reach out to us.

I hope you enjoy the newsletter. (The story about the eels is one of my favourites.)

Nick Ashburner



GKTOLMB update

The journey of the GKTOLMB

The Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board (GKTOLMB) was established under the 2010 Recognition and Settlement Agreement.

Our role is to provide strategic leadership over the Gunaikurnai joint management of parks and reserves, ensuring that Traditional Owner knowledge, culture and values lead the management of Country.

We work in partnership with GLaWAC, Parks Victoria and DEECA to protect cultural heritage, care for Country, support Gunaikurnai self-determination, and create opportunities for employment, Gunaikurnai businesses, cultural learning and environmental stewardship.

Setting up the GKTOLMB was supported by community and was an important step in recognising Aboriginal rights and returning Traditional Owners to a leadership role in caring for Country. Before Joint Management (JM), Gunaikurnai were not involved in decisions about the management of their ancestral lands. Starting the GKTOLMB created a formal process through which Gunaikurnai could lead and be involved in land management on their Country.

The Board has up to 11 members, named by GLaWAC and appointed by the Minister for Environment, and is independent from other JM partners. Most members are Gunaikurnai and are appointed for their cultural knowledge and authority. The non-Gunaikurnai members bring skills in land, environment and water management.

The Board's first major job was to write the Joint Management Plan (JMP) for the first ten parks and reserves that were granted as Aboriginal Title to Gunaikurnai. This JMP was approved in 2018. It is a strategic framework for managing the JM parks, outlining what needs to be done to heal country and to protect cultural heritage. Since then, the Board has focused on implementing the plan, monitoring its effectiveness, and ensuring that it achieves its outcomes.

The Board also funds cultural interpretation projects, cultural heritage mapping, and provides strategic leadership to support the protection of cultural heritage, the revitalisation of language and traditions, and the strengthening of connections between people and Country. We do this in close collaboration with GLaWAC.

Some examples include:

- The Cultural Interpretation Strategy and Cultural Interpretations plans for Buchan Munji and Tarra Bulga National Park.
- The Bung Yarnda camping and access strategy.
- Several research and Cultural Mapping projects across the JM parks, like the New Guinea 2 cave work and current work happening in the Alpine parks.
- Aerial photography across the parks.
- The site concept plan for Buchan Munji.

Today, our vision is for Gunaikurnai people to be leading the care of their Country every day. We are now writing JMPs for the Alpine Parks and Nooramunga Marine and Coastal Park.

Through collaboration, cultural leadership and a commitment to healing Country, the Board continues to guide the JM partnership and contribute to the long-term protection of Gippsland's natural and cultural landscapes for future generations.

We recruit new members when vacancies come up. If you would like to know more, reach out to any of the Board members, or GLaWAC staff who will put you in touch with us.

Gunaikurnai TOLMB



The GKTOLMB Board and staff (left to right): Rob Willersdord (Project Officer), Glenys Watts (Chairperson), Liz Clay, Josh Chikuse, Craig Parker (Executive Officer), Marianne Atkinson, Jennifer Fraser, Jess Reeves, Russell Mullett, Allan Bawden. Absent: Lisa Giblin, Patrick Mullett

News from Gellung Warl

Gellung Warl's newly elected Members address Parliament

On 22 June 2026 Members of Gellung Warl, including Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation Reserved Seat holder Troy McDonald, came together at the Victorian Parliament, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country. They gave their first speeches in their roles at Gellung Warl.

Members spoke to their aspirations for Treaty, their connections and responsibilities to community, to Country and to culture.

Thane Garvey welcomed Members to beautiful Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country before they entered Parliament to begin the proceedings. They then heard from former Co-chairs Marcus Stewart and Ngarra Murray, who provided the history of this work and encouraging us to continue to walk together towards a better future for all.

Both general elected Members and Reserved Seat holders addressed the Assembly, with Members speaking in language, sharing personal anecdotes and reflections on their journeys to Treaty.

Two cloaks were presented to the Co-chairs, in line with the protocols of men and women's business.

This ceremony also represents the strength



Troy McDonald delivering his inaugural speech as GLaWAC's Reserved Seat Holder

of the Assembly Members, and the responsibility the Co-Chairs have accepted to Members and community.

Treaty can amplify voices of Traditional Owners through our strengthened relationship with the State.

Gellung Warl will be answerable to Traditional Owners on how new functions and powers are used.

Gellung Warl's first priority is working with our communities on how we can use the new powers and responsibilities to secure better outcomes across health, education and employment for our people.

You can watch every Member's inaugural speech on the Gellung Warl YouTube found [here](#).

Gellung Warl



Gellung Warl's newly elected Members.

The Revised Settlement Agreement

A Revised Settlement Agreement (RSA) package for Gunaikurnai people has commenced between the State of Victoria and GLaWAC as the Gunaikurnai peoples' representative corporation, updating the original RSA signed in 2010.

A Gunaikurnai negotiating team started discussions with the State for a revised agreement in 2020. In November 2025 the new package was agreed upon at a Full Group Meeting.

In May this year, GLaWAC Board members and the CEO formally signed the new documents, locking in funding for some key initiatives as well as longer-term economic investment.

Among a raft of commitments, the package includes an updated RSA and Indigenous Land Use Agreement, funding to expand the oyster program, and funding to support the renovation of properties that can be transferred to GLaWAC.

The package includes two Natural Resource Management Agreements, creating opportunities for Gunaikurnai people to exercise Traditional Owner rights and have a stronger role in natural resource management on Country.



Natural Resource Management crew members Trey Parsons, Corey Jack, Phil Solomon and Ian Sullivan doing shore bank stabilisation works.

Also included are commitments from the State of Victoria to keep working with GLaWAC and Gunaikurnai people around water allocations, forest produce and bush foods, renewable energy, and the remediation of coal mines.

The package includes a major funding contribution to the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Trust.

Within the package there are also funds for self-determined use. The GLaWAC Board of Directors is currently considering how best to use these for the long-term benefit of all Gunaikurnai.

You can find out more about the RSA package and what it means for Gunaikurnai people in the full story on the Our Yarns page on the website.

Tyler Hood from the aquaculture crew, showing oysters from our oyster program to Elizabeth Woods, from the Fisheries Research Development Corporation.



our Community

50 Years of Deadly at the NAIDOC Family Day

What a day!

On Thursday the 9th of July, more than 1,500 people gathered at the Knob Reserve in Stratford to celebrate 50 years of NAIDOC, with community travelling from right across Gippsland to connect, celebrate culture and enjoy the day together.



A day like this is only possible because of the many people who give their time, talent and support. Thank you to everyone who helped make it happen – from our cultural leaders, performers and MC, to our stallholders, food vendors, community organisations, emergency services, volunteers and event partners.

A special congratulations to Euphie Hood, whose deadly frog artwork featured on this year's much-loved NAIDOC T-shirts, proudly worn throughout the day.

Finally, a huge thank you to the GLaWAC NAIDOC Working Group, our staff and volunteers, and everyone who came along to celebrate. It was a fantastic day, and we can't wait to do it all again next year.

Take a look through the photos – you might spot yourself, your family or a few familiar faces! If you want to relive the day, you'll find even more photos in the full story on the Our Yarns page on our website.









Isaac is kicking goals!

Isaac Brown is making his mark on the national stage – and he is only just getting started.

A highly skilled young footballer, Isaac recently represented Victorian Country at the 2026 AFL Under-16 National Championships on the Gold Coast, going up against the best Under-16 players from across Australia.

He more than held his own. Isaac earned selection in the 2026 Under-16 All Australian Team, caught the attention of AFL talent scouts and media, and continues to progress through the Hawthorn Football Club Next Generation Academy.

Just as importantly, Isaac grew both on and off the field – building friendships, learning from elite coaches and representing his family, Gippsland, his Aboriginal community and Victoria Country with humility, respect and pride.

These experiences will continue to shape him not only as a footballer but also as a young leader within his community.

At GLaWAC, we are proud to have been able to support Isaac through the Community Benefit Fund. The talent has always been there – we can't wait to see where it takes him.



Isaac in action at the 2026 Marsh AFL National Development Championships U16 Boys match between Victoria Metro and Victoria Country. Photo courtesy of Rob Lawson/AFL Photos.

Will's spear goes to Gellung Warl

A spear made by 15-year-old William Murdoch, a proud Yuin-Gunaikurnai male, now has an important place in the history of Gellung Warl.

The spear was presented to members of the Elder's Voice in April this year – at the final meeting of the outgoing First People's Assembly of Victoria.

Will said making the spear was a powerful personal experience.

"I made this spear because I wanted to see how much it made me feel connected to the Country and my ancestors. Making the spear was a spiritual experience for me."

"I added some feathers to represent the ocean and the plants of my country, since the feathers had green and blue."

"The wood that was used in my spear was locally-sourced cherry tree and tea tree. The spear head is made from cherry tree wood, and the spear handle is made from tea tree wood."

Congratulations, Will. That is certainly a spear with a story to tell.



Photo: William Murdoch with his spear

Tell us what you think

This is your newsletter
and we want to hear from you.

What works?
What doesn't work?
What do you want to see in it?

Scan the QR code and tell us.





Paula Morgan, Jodie Mills, Rebecca Abbey



LEAHA opens its new clinic

The Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association (LEAHA) has opened the doors to its new clinic at Lakes Entrance – a significant milestone and the result of decades of leadership and advocacy.

The story begins 20 years ago with three remarkable Aboriginal women – Aunty Phyllis Andy, Aunty Lana Gordon and the late Aunty Fay Harrison. They recognised that many Aboriginal people were reluctant to use mainstream health services and understood that improving health outcomes meant first building trust, connection and belonging.

Along the way the Lakes Entrance Koori Elders Group was established to help guide the vision. The group included Aunty Phyllis Andy, Aunty Lana Gordon, Uncle Bevan Harrison, Aunty Fay Harrison, Uncle Lenny Hayes, Uncle Tom Perry and Uncle Billy Squires.

The group was supported by many other respected Elders, whose cultural knowledge, wisdom and generosity helped shape the journey. LEAHA remembers with respect Uncle Bill, Aunty June Coates, Uncle Frank Harrison, Uncle Terry Hayes and Aunty Kath Solomon, who have since passed into the Dreaming.



Aunty Phyllis Andy,
Uncle Lenny Hayes

We also acknowledge Elders who continue to provide leadership and guidance, including Margaret Bryant, Leanne Edwards, Aunty Barb Hayes, Aunty Michelle Coates Mongta and Aunty Helen Morgan.

LEAHA also thanks Gippsland Lakes Community Health and the many people and organisations that supported this venture.

Since joining VACCHO and NACCHO in 2011, LEAHA has grown from around 10 staff to more than 30. Our annual budget has grown from around \$1 million to over \$6 million, with services now spanning primary healthcare, family support, Aboriginal Health Practitioners, community programs and more.

After years of advocacy, LEAHA proposed a purpose-built clinic to the Australian Government in 2020. Now, that vision is a reality.

The new clinic is more than a healthcare facility. It is a place where culture and healing walk together, families feel they belong, and our youth can see Aboriginal leadership shaping their community's health and future.

As LEAHA opens this new chapter, the organisation is celebrating its past while looking confidently towards the future.

Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association

All photos courtesy of VACCHO



Paula Morgan & Aunty Phyllis Andy



Sally Hood, Belinda Gallasch, Paula Morgan, Sharyn Margheriti

Meet Eli: Thirteen years old and up before the sun

At 5am, while most of Dinner Plain is still asleep under a blanket of frost, 13-year-old Eli is already up. There's snow to clear and recycling to sort with his Pop, followed by a few hours of schoolwork – all before he clips into his board.

Eli normally lives in Merrijig, but for the last few years he has moved to Dinner Plain in Term 3 to live with his grandparents, who live and work on the mountain.

They understand how important being home on Country is to Eli. He is the great-grandson of Uncle Harry Stewart, making him a sixth-generation descendant of George Thomas. This is also where he has found his passion for snowboarding – a sport that has built his confidence and one he works hard at, season after season.

This year, that dedication paid off. Eli's Pop put his name forward for the Team Hotham Snowboard Squad, and after going through the full selection process, Eli found out in May that he'd made it.

Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, Eli trains with an elite coach and the team, building his skills and fitness. He will also travel and compete with the team at some of Australia's biggest snowboarding venues.

To make it work, Eli homeschools four days each week, leaving three days for training. It's a big commitment, but one he thrives on.

Behind every 5am wake-up and every run down the mountain, there is a boy who has found his place – with his Pop cheering him on from the sidelines.

Keran Kramme, Eli's Nan



Here at GLaWAC we are proud to have helped out with squad membership and training costs through the Community Benefits Fund. Shoot for the sky Eli, we are all right behind you!

Snowy BushBank – caring for Country

Moogji Aboriginal Council has just completed a four-year project, delivered in partnership with the community and DEECA, restoring a 10 acre property that was previously farmed in the Lower Snowy catchment.

The Snowy BushBank project was delivered by Moogji's Environmental Team from start to finish. The team collected seed from local State Forests, propagated the seedlings in our native nursery, prepared the site and planted around 20,000 native trees and plants back on Country.

The project focused on bringing native vegetation back to an area that had previously been used as farmland, helping to create more habitat for local wildlife and improve the condition of the land.

This project has been a great success for Moogji, the community and the local ecosystems. It has also given the Environmental Team valuable experience in collecting local seeds, propagating plants and carrying

out large-scale revegetation work.

Over the coming years, the plants will continue to grow and establish, creating more habitat and helping to bring the area back to a healthier, more natural state.

The Snowy BushBank project is a great example of Moogji people doing the work on Country and continuing to care for Country for future generations.

Moogji Aboriginal Council



A busy NAIDOC at Wulgunggo Ngalu

The Wulgunggo Ngalu site in South Gippsland covers about 165 hectares, mostly regrowth with some remnant bushland. Storm damage over the years has left some tracks overgrown and access difficult, so we've been busy clearing and renewing tracks across the site.

For years, our General Manager Shaun Braybrook has dreamed of developing a 3km running track. This year, that dream became a reality when we hosted our first Fun Run during NAIDOC Week, in partnership with Wellington Athletics Club. More than 50 people took part, with participants travelling from across Gippsland and Melbourne. The day included cultural activities and performances, with every competitor receiving a special commemorative medal. It was a great success, and we hope it becomes an annual event.

NAIDOC Week also saw us share culture with the Yarram and District Health Service through a Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony and cultural performance, followed by a bush foods barbecue with staff and aged care residents from Crossley House and St Elmo's. It's always a special day, with residents sharing memories of gum leaf smells and smoke from local farming days.



At Memorial Park, we again held our annual Welcome to Country, Smoking Ceremony and dance performance for the Yarram and district community. Children and local Scouts joined in cultural games and totem animal dancing, led by program participants.

We also played our annual NAIDOC football and netball games with Woodside Football Netball Club, and earlier in the season supported Woodside to host the North Gippsland League's first Indigenous game as part of the Sir Doug Nicholls Round.

Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place



our Culture

Culture Hub update

Firstly, I would like to thank Cath Thomas and acknowledge the considerable contribution she has made to GLaWAC throughout her time here. She joined us in February 2019 and worked in a wide range of roles from Reception to Joint Management, Economic Development & Tourism, through to the Senior Manager in the Culture Hub and co-lead on the Aboriginal Cultural Advisory Committee. In August Cath left GLaWAC to pursue family and personal goals.

Shane O'Shannassy has also left us to take up a great opportunity working with Parks Victoria in the Cultural Heritage space. We thank both Shane and Cath for all their dedication and hard work and we wish them both all the best in their new adventures.

As for the rest of the team, I have stepped into the Interim Senior Manager role, Heather Hood and Hugh Pepper continue to do their deadly work in Community Engagement and Cultural Education, while Aunty Lena Morris continues to support the team through broader community engagement and her work on major project and events.

Heather was heavily involved in the planning of yet another deadly NAIDOC Community Day at the Knob Reserve – demonstrating leadership and dedication. Once again, the event showed the community spirit in coming together along with family to celebrate and reflect on 50 years of Deadly.

The Culture Hub team also supported the community consultation sessions around Native Title and has undertaken extensive planning to align with the updated version of the GLaWAC Strategic Plan. This work continues and will inform a coordinated approach to the work we deliver in the 2026/27 financial year.

Kelvin Moffatt, Interim Senior Manager



South East NOW celebrates First Nations art

"Art goes beyond the canvas. It carries our stories, strengthens our culture, and creates space for expression, healing, and belonging."

These powerful words from Claire Luke set the tone for the opening of South East NOW at GLaWAC in June.

Co-hosted by GLaWAC and East Gippsland Art Gallery for the second year, the exhibition brought together the work of 17 established and emerging First Nations artists from across the region. South East NOW has long been part of East Gippsland Art Gallery's calendar, and what began as a first-time collaboration in 2025 has now grown into an ongoing partnership. The exhibition creates space for First Nations artists to share their creativity and perspectives with the wider community, with their work showcased across two venues in Kalimna and Bairnsdale, each with its own opening event.

"This show brings together a diverse group of artists, who are all connected to this country, and gives them a platform to share their work, their stories, and their perspectives with a wider audience" continued Claire.

The six-week exhibition was a great celebration of art, culture and connection across Gippsland. Congratulations to everyone involved. We can't wait to do it again!



Sidney Murray and Claire Luke – two deadly event managers!

"I want to say a huge thankyou to all the artists involved. This wouldn't exist without you. Thankyou for sharing your work and allowing us the opportunity to step inside your creative world."

Claire Luke



Jamie Thomas conducting the smoking ceremony at GLaWAC's opening. Behind him are Sidney Murray, Ray Thomas, Kevin Murray and Ricky Young.

SOUTH EAST NOW 2026

JASON BATES, BRADLEY BROWN
LEANN J. EDWARDS,
RONALD EDWARDS-PEPPER,
DR AUNTY EILEEN HARRISON,
IAN HARRISON,
KYLIE AND SUSAN MARTIN
LUKE MONGTA, JENNIFER MULLETT
SONYA NAYLOR, ALICE ANN PEPPER,
PATRICIA PITTMAN, SHANE O'SHANASSY
JENNIFER SINGH, ALAN SOLOMON
RAY THOMAS

12 June - 25 July 2026



Salmon Fishing by Ian Harrison (detail)



Home, by Jennifer Singh.



Weaving artworks by Kylie and Susan Martin - detail.

our Country

A turtle table for Hoddinott St

Check out this deadly turtle table, now happily installed at the Hoddinott St Playground in Bairnsdale!

Designed and made by Uncle Dougie Hood from our Business Enterprise team, this friendly turtle started life as a simple sketch. Dougie then spent many hours carefully carving and sanding to bring his vision to life, and now it's putting smiles on the faces of local children.

Photo: Uncle Dougie Hood with Mick Stephenson from Productive Innovations on installation day.



Where the wild eels go

Eels are slippery, elusive creatures – but we're beginning to find out where they go when they leave Country.

For the past few years, we have been monitoring this culturally significant species in two ways: radio tracking short-finned eels with the help of Community in the Franklin River, and satellite tracking long-finned eels as they begin their spawning migration.

The satellite work is being done in partnership with the Arthur Rylah Institute (ARI) – with GLaWAC's Rangers working alongside researchers.

It all started in Autumn 2024, when 20 adult

eels were captured from local waterways, fitted with satellite tags and released. These tags tracked their movements for five months as the eels made their way far out to sea to spawn. While we know they leave freshwater to travel north, much about that epic trek remains a mystery. There are many unanswered questions.

But now ... we are starting to unravel the mystery.

The tagged eels travelled between 2,100 and 3,400 kilometres, with some venturing hundreds of kilometres offshore and reaching as far as the Coral Sea. The map really highlights the scale of their grand adventure!

We also discovered fascinating detail about their behaviour. Eels follow a daily pattern, swimming in shallower water at night and diving deeper during the day. One eel was recorded diving to 952 metres!

The data also reveals if an eel was eaten by a predator – and in some cases, what kind of predator – helping us better understand the challenges they face during migration.

Findings from this work forms part of a groundbreaking study led by Wayne Koster from ARI. Published in *Frontiers in Marine Science*, it is well worth a read – the way the tags work, and what can be learned from the data, is genuinely fascinating. You can find a link to it in the full story in *Our Yarns* on the website.

This work continues – with more satellite monitoring planned to help build our understanding over time.

Because, while eels may be difficult to find, we're slowly piecing together the story of where they go – and just how far they travel beyond Country.



Bryce Baxter helping to put a satellite tag on one of the first eels.



Map showing how seven of the tagged eels made it all the way to the tropics! Credit: Wayne Koster, ARI



Logan, Shak and Amelia in the Monash archaeology labs. Photo courtesy Bruno David, Monash University.

Finding more ways to care for Country

"It's very rewarding travelling on Country and being able to access and assess the sites that our ancestors occupied before us. And being given the opportunity to protect these sites from further damage comes with a huge responsibility that our Rangers are very capable of upholding," says Ranger Coordinator Rob Baxter.

"We are very fortunate to be given this opportunity as guardians of Country."

That sense of purpose is at the heart of what GLaWAC's On Country Rangers have been doing lately – getting out across Country, working with the RAP team and building their skills in cultural heritage assessment.

On the ground, that has meant checking out sites in the Mitchell River National Park – some first recorded back in the 1970s and 1980s – as well as places around Shoreline Drive in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park. Rangers have even been flying drones to cover more ground, gathering the information needed to work out priorities for protection.

And it doesn't stop when they leave the field. Rangers Logan Hudson and Shakiah Tungai,

along with RAP Site Monitor Amelia Harrison, recently headed to the Monash archaeology labs in Melbourne to sort through material from excavated sites – adding another layer to their understanding of the places they work to protect.

There are so many ways to deepen our knowledge of Country, and we are keen to take advantage of them all so we can protect it for generations to come.



Tyler Hood walking a site in the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park



Rob with Kevin Hood in the Mitchell River National Park.

Paula's artwork in the Krauatungalong Walk

"My painting tells the story of the unbreakable connection between our land, sea and waterways. Every part of Country is alive and connected, carrying the stories, knowledge and spirit of our ancestors."

These are the words of Paula Harrison – one of the talented Gunaikurnai artists who responded to our callout in March for artwork and design elements for projects in Lakes Entrance, Tarra Bulga National Park and Buchan Munji.

Paula's creative vision will now help embody that connection between land, sea and waterways along the Krauatungalong Walk that is taking shape in Lakes Entrance. It is a fitting place for an artwork that carries so much meaning.

That connection is being woven into the walk in a very tangible way. The plan is to sandblast five elements from Paula's beautiful and complex painting – the dolphin, eagle, gathering circle, saltbush and canoe – into

"It celebrates the harmony between people and nature. It is a reminder that when we care for Country, Country cares for us. The land, the sea and the waterways are not separate – they are one living system, connected through culture, spirit and life itself."

the concrete footbridge in October. Other design elements will be carved into posts at the easterly end of the walk, topped with more of her artwork.

Art has long been used to tell stories, and now this form of cultural expression will bring Gunaikurnai stories and perspectives to everyone who visits the Krauatungalong Walk.



Fire pits for Pettmans

Pettmans Beach Camping Area in Lake Tyers State Park is one of our favourite spots for a bit of beach fishing. And there's nothing better after a hard days fishing than sitting around a cosy campfire gazing up at the stars.

Luckily, GLaWAC and Parks Victoria Rangers got to work down at Pettmans recently, installing brand-spanking new fire pits.

These fire pits will be a much-appreciated upgrade for campers who previously had to contend with battered and rusted old cooking facilities.

Image: GLaWAC Rangers Logan Hudson, Shay Terrick, Bryce Baxter and John Baxter with PV Ranger Matt Palmer.

The Knob Reserve Master Plan is here!

After 12 months of hard work and consultation, the Knob Reserve Master Plan is complete.

The Knob Reserve is part of a living cultural landscape with a powerful history, and the Master Plan will guide how we will look after this special place into the future.

Some of the key actions include:

- creating a stronger Gunaikurnai presence
- upgrading facilities such as the stage, shelters and signage

- creating a children's nature play area
- improving vehicle and pedestrian movement and connections between key areas.

The next step is to seek funding to bring the plan to life.

Read the Master Plan at <https://gunaikurnai.org/our-country/joint-management/the-knob-reserve>.





Angusvale campground.

Uncle Dougie Hood's artwork on the shelter floor at Angusvale.

Teaming up in the mountains

Our On Country crews have been kicking goals high up in Brabralung country, getting through a ton of work to make improvements in the Mitchell River National Park and Alpine National Park.

These parks are managed by GLaWAC in partnership with our mates at Parks Victoria.

In September we put the finishing touches on an upgrade at Angusvale Campground, which included fencing and boulder barriers, heaps of new native trees and plants, and new tables and picnic structures.

Through the winter our crews got to work up in the beautiful (but very cold) Victorian Alps, making similar upgrades to visitor infrastructure at eight camping and visitor areas throughout the Alpine National Park including The Pinnacles, Pioneer Racecourse Camping Area, Hogtown Camping Area and Bullock Flat.

These jobs were a joint effort from all our different On Country crews – Natural Resource Management, Business Enterprise and the On Country Rangers.

Team work really does make the dream work.



Chris Hood, one of the spearheads of the project, on the tools at Angusvale.

Looking out for the peatlands

Glenn Digby from DEECA, Matt Holland (Senior Manager Strategic Delivery) and NRM Crew Leader Corey Jack up on the alpine peatlands of Mt Hotham in June. Peatlands like these only form under very specific conditions – the right place, soil, climate and water all have to line up just right. The crew were up there carrying out condition assessments and keeping an eye out for weeds and pest animals – all part of keeping these rare environments healthy.





Delivering the stones to Glenmaggie Weir Reserve, with Uncle Russell Mullett

Grinding stones on display at Glenmaggie

There is a new place to witness and learn about the lives of our Old People on Country, thanks to a special partnership between GLaWAC and Southern Rural Water.

Back in 2021, GLaWAC Cultural Heritage Site Monitors Dillon and Malcolm Siely uncovered what they later learned to be large grinding stones along Norden's Lane outside Maffra.

Dillon and Malcolm had been doing a cultural survey in the area before Southern Rural Water's big upgrade of the irrigation system.

Under the Aboriginal Heritage Act of 2006, cultural surveys like this must be done before any kind of digging or high impact activity takes place in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity.

The stones, which had several very distinct grinding grooves, had been covered by soil movement over the years.

Once Uncle Russell Mullett identified what had been found, the conversation quickly turned to how the grinding stones could be kept on Country and protected, while still allowing for the pipeline project to continue.

So he had a yarn with Southern Rural Water, which agreed to fund the creation of a new home for the grinding stones at nearby Glenmaggie Weir Reserve.

Uncle Dougie Hood and our Business Enterprise team got to work, designing a seat and display enclosure for the stones, where they are now not only protected but also made available to the public as another opportunity to learn about and celebrate the culture and customs of our Ancestors.

We're currently in the process of creating some interpretive signage for the site, too.



Circled: Discovering the grinding stones.

The display enclosure

Exploring wetlands together

Our On Country Rangers and Natural Resource Management crews recently spent a valuable day on Country with the West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (WGCMA).

The day began at a wetland near the Thomson River, where the group shared knowledge about wetland environments, including the bush foods they provide, before heading to Heart Morass to see wetland restoration in action. WGCMA demonstrated new infrastructure that allows fresh water to enter the wetland while preventing water from flowing back out. This has significantly reduced saltwater levels in the watered area, helping restore the wetland.



Days like this strengthen our understanding of how water catchments connect with the broader cultural landscape, while creating opportunities to share knowledge and ideas. The visit also sparked discussions about the

potential to restore a dry wetland in the future, with opportunities for water quality monitoring, eDNA testing, and monitoring of vegetation, animals and birds before, during and after restoration.



Matt Bowler (WGCMA), Thomas Dalrymple, Michael Welsh Dalton, Joel Kilgour (WGCMA), Andrew Jonkers, Michael Atkinson, Jared Brown, Adrian Clemens (WGCMA) Bradley Atkinson, Jake Atkinson, Phil Solomon.



Keeping it clean

On Country Rangers John Baxter and Jordan Harrison out at Lake Tyers State Park, cutting back the bracken and overgrowth on the Lonely Bay Walk that winds around the sparkling waters of Bung Yarnda (Lake Tyers). This sort of work is just part of the regular maintenance that the Rangers do to keep our joint managed parks in great condition so they can be enjoyed by everyone.

Our Economy

A harvest of skills and knowledge

Tending plants and harvesting bush foods together creates a healing space for community to learn and share knowledge about growing Gunaikurnai plants.

Since October last year, 28 participants have enrolled in GLaWAC's garinga djimbayang Bush Foods program at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place. The hands-on, accredited horticulture training has been delivered with TAFE Gippsland in our culturally safe, outdoor nursery space.

There were some great outings, with participants learning about native plants and bush tucker while sharing Indigenous cultural knowledge on Country. Field visits took in Port Albert, Tarra Bulga National Park, Cranbourne Botanic Gardens, Yanun Wanduin Indigenous Garden at Yinnar, The Knob Reserve at Stratford and the Seed Community Garden in Sale.

In August, more than 40 people gathered at Kalimna West for presentations, with Grattan Mullet welcoming everyone to Gunaikurnai Country in our Wangun Amphitheatre. Together, they celebrated the achievements of all the men who received a Certificate of Participation in the program. GLaWAC's Natural Resource Management crew members Jake Atkinson, Michael Atkinson and Jared Browne were all awarded a full Certificate of Completion.

This is the first Traditional Owner-led TAFE program of its kind in Victoria.

Thank you to all the deadly men who've been part of this program. Be proud, stand tall – and most importantly, lead.

Caring for Country is more important now than ever.

Sam Monks, Bush Foods Program Manager



Jake in the hothouse at Cranbourne Botanic Gardens



Jake, Jared and Michael with their certificates



Propagating plants at the Sale Seed Community Garden



Jared, Michael and Jake at the Yanun Wanduin Indigenous Garden



We see a future in which the energy industry invests thoughtfully in a thriving and prosperous Gunaikurnai community and protects the land and waters on which it relies.

Our vision of that future is laid out in Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow, GLaWAC's new Energy Strategy which we launched at the Gippsland New Energy Conference in August.

Featuring artwork by Robbie Farnham, our Energy Strategy also makes clear what our goals are for mob, including:

- more opportunities for jobs, training and economic development
- the chance to heal Country damaged by old energy systems
- greater authority in how projects are planned and approved.

Follow the QR code to find out more.

Bush Spices for sale!

You can now buy a range of Gunaikurnai Bush Spices from GLaWAC – including Mountain Pepper Berry, Coast Saltbush, Native Thyme and Wattle Seed.

These can spice up your cooking beautifully: Mint Bush can replace thyme and oregano, Mountain Pepper can be used instead of black pepper or chilli, and Wattleseed is a great addition to sweet or savoury dishes with coffee and chocolate flavours.

Grown, gathered and packed on Gunaikurnai country, the bush spices have sprung from a special partnership between GLaWAC and Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place.

"Culture is a vehicle we use to promote change, and growing bush foods is another step in that process," explained Shaun Braybrook, General Manager, Wulgunggo Ngalu.

All profits from sales of the bush spices goes back into the program.

So - drop in to our offices and have a look at the range on offer.



our organisation

Welcome to our new staff

There are plenty of new faces around GLaWAC!

First up is **Hugh Pepper**, our new Cultural Education Officer. Hugh will be working to strengthen the way Gunaikurnai culture, knowledge and perspectives are represented and shared through the education system.

Our Natural Resource Management team also has some new faces, with **Andrew Jonkers** joining the east and **Bradley Atkinson** the west. While in the west, we'd also like to welcome **Kobi Hood**, who joins the team as an On Country Ranger.

Over in our RAP team, **Amelia Harrison** has joined us as a Site Monitor, playing an important role in helping protect and manage Gunaikurnai cultural heritage.

Marianne Atkinson brings extensive skills and experience to the role of Major Projects Engagement Manager in the Growth and Sustainability team, based in Morwell.

James Hackel steps in as Cultural Landscape Manager, based in Kalimna. James will work with staff, community and partners to implement our Cultural Landscape Framework and help shape future land management priorities.

Behind the scenes, **Aaron Correa Guzman** joins GLaWAC as Finance Manager, supporting the organisation's financial wellbeing as we continue to grow.

A big welcome to you all – we're glad to have you on the team!

Milling it up!

Last month, TAFE instructor Kevin Nunn spent time with On Country team members Andrew Jonkers and Bryce Baxter training them to safely use a Lucas Mill – a portable sawmill that turns large logs into workable timber.

The Lucas Mill belongs to TAFE Gippsland, our neighbours at the Kalimna campus, while the hardwood logs used for the training came from Buchan Munji. They were part of a large pile left behind by the devastating 2023 floods and were being cleared as part of our post-flood recovery work with Parks Victoria and DEECA.

But Senior Manager of Business Enterprise, Willow Carter, saw more than a pile of flood debris – he saw an opportunity to turn it into something useful. So we brought the logs and slabs back to Kalimna for milling.

Now Andrew and Bryce have a new skill, and we have locally sourced timber ready for projects on Country.

"I've always been keen to work with timber, so it's great to have the opportunity to do some training on the Lucas Mill. It's also deadly we'll be able to use these boards for projects on Country." Bryce Baxter



eDNA training on Country

For the past few years, GLaWAC has used eDNA to help build a clearer picture of the health of the Gippsland Lakes and surrounding waterways.

eDNA is genetic material left behind in the environment by animals, plants and other living things. By collecting and testing water samples, we can identify species that have recently passed through an area, helping us monitor biodiversity, track changes and better understand the health of Country.

This year, that work expanded westward, and so in April more staff from across our On Country teams were trained up.

After an introduction to the science behind eDNA, crews headed out on Country. They learned how to use the equipment and collect and prepare samples. We would like to thank the team from EnviroDNA – Josh Griffiths, Isaac Di Natale and Brendan Cohen for sharing their knowledge and experience.

The beauty of eDNA testing is that it is simple to do, highly sensitive, non-invasive and efficient. With a water sample you can identify species that have recently passed through an area – without disturbing a thing.



Jake Atkinson takes a sample, watched over by Josh and Isaac from eDNA

Learning these skills also gives GLaWAC ownership of the data being gathered on Country – who is collecting it, how it is collected and what we do with it.

Over time, it all adds up – a growing picture of how Country is changing and responding to how we care for it.

Pretty powerful stuff from a water sample.



Trey Parsons and Corey Jack point something very important out to Josh



Jared Brown and Deon Baxter take a water sample

Congratulations PJ!

Earlier this year, Peter Ritchie – known to most as PJ – became a fully qualified Aboriginal Heritage Officer (AHO). This is no mean feat and follows significant formal study through ICETS (Investigation Compliance and Enforcement Training Systems).

AHOs play a critical role in protecting Country and Culture. They investigate reports of harm to Aboriginal cultural heritage, work with stakeholders to help prevent impacts, and assess compliance for Cultural Heritage Management Plans and Cultural Heritage Permits.

For PJ, the training opened his eyes to just how complex that work is.

"I think the biggest thing for me was seeing how much actually goes into an investigation. I found the interviewing side of this very interesting – learning how to ask the right questions and get the information you need, as well as learning how to properly handle and assess potential evidence. It's not just about finding out what happened, it's about making sure you've got the right evidence to back it all up."

"I'm a lot more structured in how I approach things now. I think more about the evidence, how I'm documenting things and making sure I'm not jumping to conclusions. This training has given me a real interest in investigations and made me want to keep building those skills to see where it could take me."

Alongside his new AHO qualification, PJ also coordinates the cultural heritage field staff – and this milestone is a real win for the work we do to protect Country and Culture.



PJ with RAP Site Monitor and fellow AHO, John Proctor.



PJ and John with Kate from First People's State Relations

Shout out: Harry

Someone who works tirelessly behind the scenes is Harry McDonald. You might not see him out on Country every day, but you certainly see the results of his work.

As our Digital Media Specialist, Harry keeps GLaWAC's digital and visual content up to date – from updating the website and working with design programs and apps, to making sure our visuals remain at gold standard.

He redesigned our most recent Annual Report, giving it a fresh and contemporary look, and is behind many of our publications, flyers, designs, and

merchandise, including the Bush Spice tins and the beanies featuring the beautiful Boran and Tuk design sold at this year's NAIDOC Family Day.

Harry was part of the NAIDOC Family Day working group and helped lead preparations in the three months before the event. He's also a member of our internal Aboriginal Advisory Group and makes a point of getting along to as many community events in the west as he can.

Thanks, Harry, for your hard work, leadership and commitment. We see you!





Shout out: Sharnika and Claire

We would like to acknowledge Sharnika Wade and Claire Luke for the growth, initiative and diversity of skills they have brought to supporting Elders Council meetings.

Through meeting preparation, administration and coordinating Elders Council papers and matters, both have embraced opportunities to build their professional skills while contributing to important governance processes at GLaWAC.

Their willingness to learn and take on new responsibilities helps the Elders Council run smoothly, builds valuable organisational capability for the future, and strengthens the systems and processes that support our Elders, so their voices continue to guide Gunaikurnai aspirations.

Congratulations, Sharnika and Claire, on your continued growth – and thank you for your valuable contribution.

A bird's eye view of Country

People have long imagined seeing Country as a bird does – from way up high in the sky. That perspective can reveal things we can't see from the ground, making it a valuable tool for understanding Country.

That's why we're investing in drone training for some of our staff.

In August, Michael Welsh Dalton, Harry McDonald, Logan Hudson, Tyler Hood, Deon Baxter, Kelvin Moffatt and Callum Morton took to the footy oval at Lakes Entrance to learn to fly a DJI Phantom 4 drone with the University of Melbourne.

This new skill means we can capture more great photos and videos of Country to share with you, while supporting our mapping, monitoring, surveying and data collection – giving us another way to understand and care for Country.

Huge thanks to trainer David Kennedy from the University of Melbourne for sharing his expertise.



**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.

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