

2025/2026

GUNAIKURNAI LAND AND WATERS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION (GLaWAC)

ANNUAL REPORT



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This Annual Report was designed by proud Gunai Man Harry McDonald and produced by GLaWAC

Elders Council

The Elders Council comprises Elders who are members of GLaWAC and appointed by the descendants of each identified Apical Ancestor. The Elders Council comes together throughout the year and provides critical cultural leadership to the organisation.

GLaWAC acknowledges all the Elders who contributed to the GLaWAC Elders Council:

Aunty Lesa Arvidson
Aunty Marianne Atkinson
Aunty Lynette Bishop
Aunty Beryl Booth
Uncle Mitchell Booth
Aunty Deanna Campbell
Uncle Harry Douglas
Aunty Lee-Anne Eddington
Aunty Maria Harrison
Aunty Gwen Hudson
Aunty Noretta Knight
Aunty Francie (Margaret) Komen
Aunty Susan Martin
Aunty Julie Mongta
Aunty Lena Morris (co-chair)
Uncle Ricky Mullett
Uncle Kevin Murray
Aunty Bonnie O'Shanassy
Aunty Sandra Patten
Uncle Harry Stewart
Uncle Wayne Thorpe (co-chair)
Aunty Marjorie Thorpe
Aunty Glenda Thorpe
Uncle Wayne Watkins
Aunty Glenys Watts
Aunty Robyn Yates
Aunty Raylene Young





"We are the Gunaikurnai, the First People of our Country.
The future we seek is one where Gunaikurnai stand proud and strong, where our people have strong connections to their Culture and Country, where our business and relationships are based on solid foundations, and where we are self-sufficient and highly respected.
In our future, our mob is united - the five clans of Gunaikurnai working together to support each other."



A Message from the Board Chair

This financial year has been one of consolidation, renewal and strengthening our foundations for the future.

A milestone for the Corporation was the appointment of Nick Ashburner as Chief Executive Officer in February 2026. The Board is pleased to have secured strong leadership to guide the organisation through its next phase of growth and development. Nick's appointment has brought increased focus, accountability, and operational stability, enabling us to advance our strategic priorities with confidence.

A significant achievement during the reporting period was the successful conclusion of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) negotiations. This outcome represents the culmination of more than five years of dedicated effort by a committed negotiating team who pursued this work on behalf of the Gunaikurnai people as volunteers. Their efforts spanned the leadership of three Chief Executive Officers and one Acting Chief Executive Officer and reflect an extraordinary commitment to securing a stronger future for our community. On behalf of the Board, I acknowledge and thank all those who contributed to this monumental achievement.

The RSA review outcome delivers important opportunities for GLaWAC and the Gunaikurnai people, including the expansion of our cultural estate, now 14 parks, and a stronger platform from which to advance self-determination, cultural aspirations and economic development. The successful completion of this work marks a significant step forward in our journey and positions us to create lasting benefits for current and future generations.

The year also required careful financial management. In response to challenging economic conditions and evolving demands on our resources, the corporation adopted a disciplined approach to expenditure. Through this financial stewardship, we have strengthened financial oversight, stabilised our position and improved our capacity to make informed decisions about future opportunities and investments.

As a Board, we have continued to work closely with management to strengthen governance, reporting and strategic planning. While challenges remain, we enter the next financial year with renewed optimism, stronger foundations and a clear direction for the future.

On behalf of the Board, I thank our members, Elders, staff, partners and stakeholders for their continued support, commitment and trust. Together, we are building a stronger organisation that is well positioned to deliver sustainable outcomes for the Gunaikurnai community.

Troy McDonald - Chair

GLaWAC by the Numbers

1131
TOTAL HOURS OF FIRE SUPPRESSION AND PLANNED BURNING

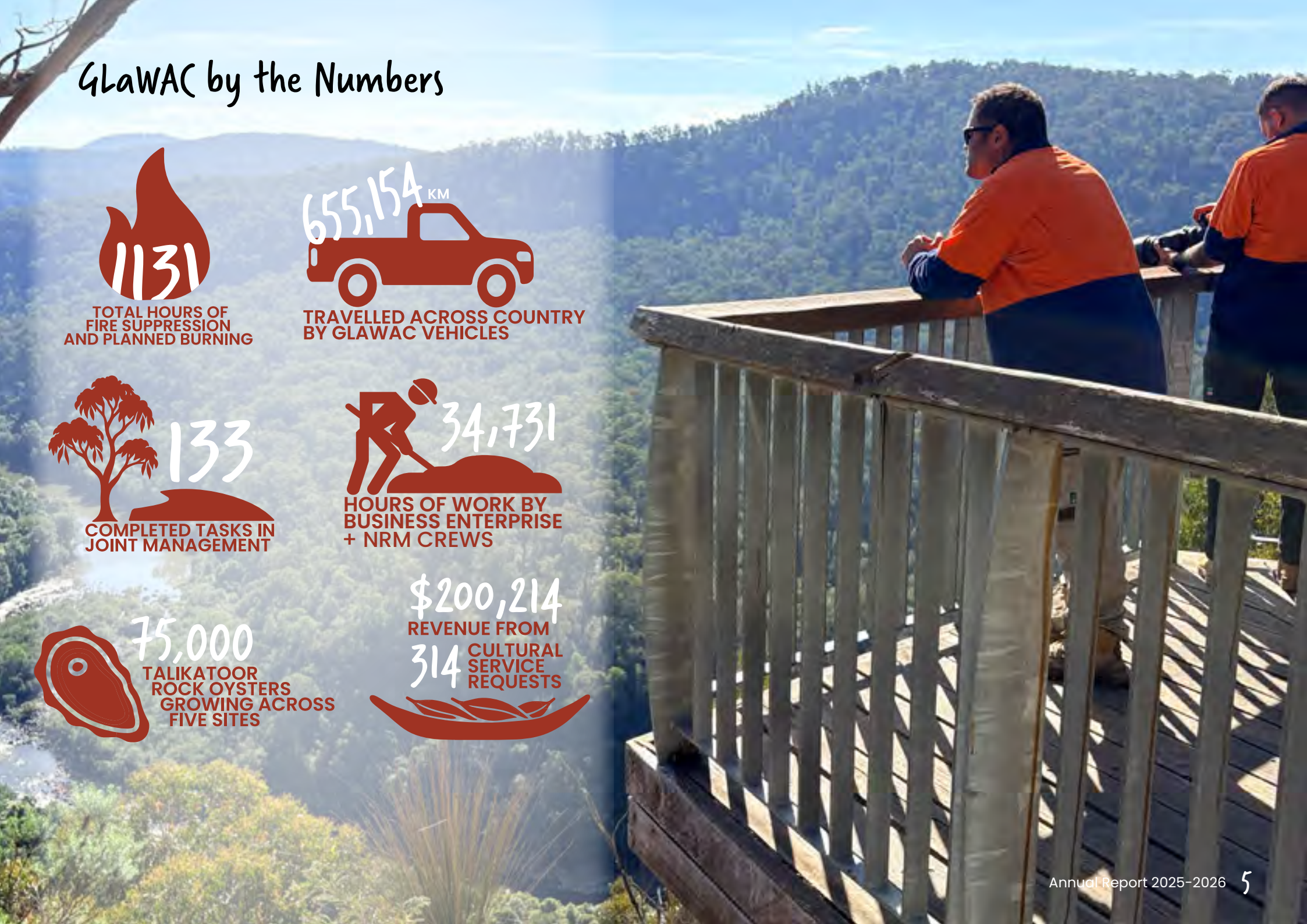
655,154 KM
TRAVELLED ACROSS COUNTRY BY GLAWAC VEHICLES

133
COMPLETED TASKS IN JOINT MANAGEMENT

34,731
HOURS OF WORK BY BUSINESS ENTERPRISE + NRM CREWS

75,000
TALIKATOOR ROCK OYSTERS GROWING ACROSS FIVE SITES

$200,214
REVENUE FROM **314** CULTURAL SERVICE REQUESTS



Community Connections on Country

This past year we increased our efforts to weave cultural and social connection through all the work we do.

Sometimes this work was very visible, such as the ceremony and cultural gatherings we hosted at GLaWAC and across Country.

Other times, it was less visible but equally important, such as the vital role the Culture Hub team played in important yarns for community around the Gellung Warl Reserved Seat elections and Recognition and Settlement Agreement decisions.

We also broke new ground in our cultural engagement work this year, running a successful test of cultural tourism offerings at Gragin (Raymond Island) and Buchan Munji, and bringing on board a new Cultural Education Officer to boost our cultural engagement in schools.

Other cultural engagement highlights of the year included the Elders Day last October, hosting the National Indigenous Disaster Resilience Gathering on Country, the Voices of our Elders camps, the new Yarning Circle in Moe, the launch of our garinga djimbayang program at Wulgunggo Ngalu Learning Place, and of course another deadly NAIDOC Family Day at the Knob Reserve.

The pictures here are from some of the cultural and community gatherings we organised this year, including:

- Sea Country boat trip for community
- NIDR Gathering at Wangun Amphitheatre
- Presentation of Will Murdoch's spear to Elders' Voice
- Launch of garinga djimbayang
- Cultural education sessions at GLaWAC
- Elders Gathering at Wangun Amphitheatre
- Cultural Hub at Gragin
- Opening of yarning circle at Edward Hunter Heritage Bush Reserve





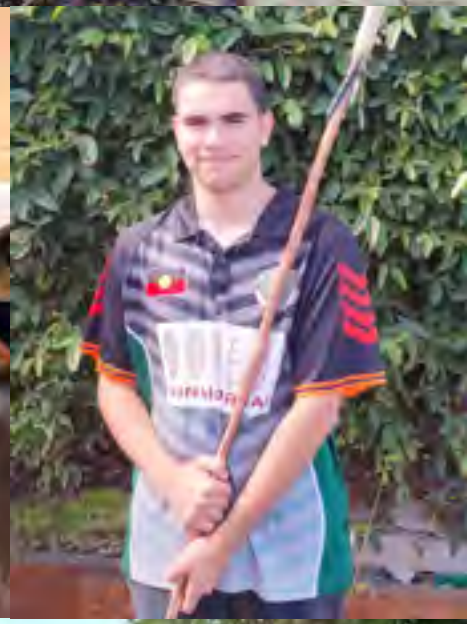










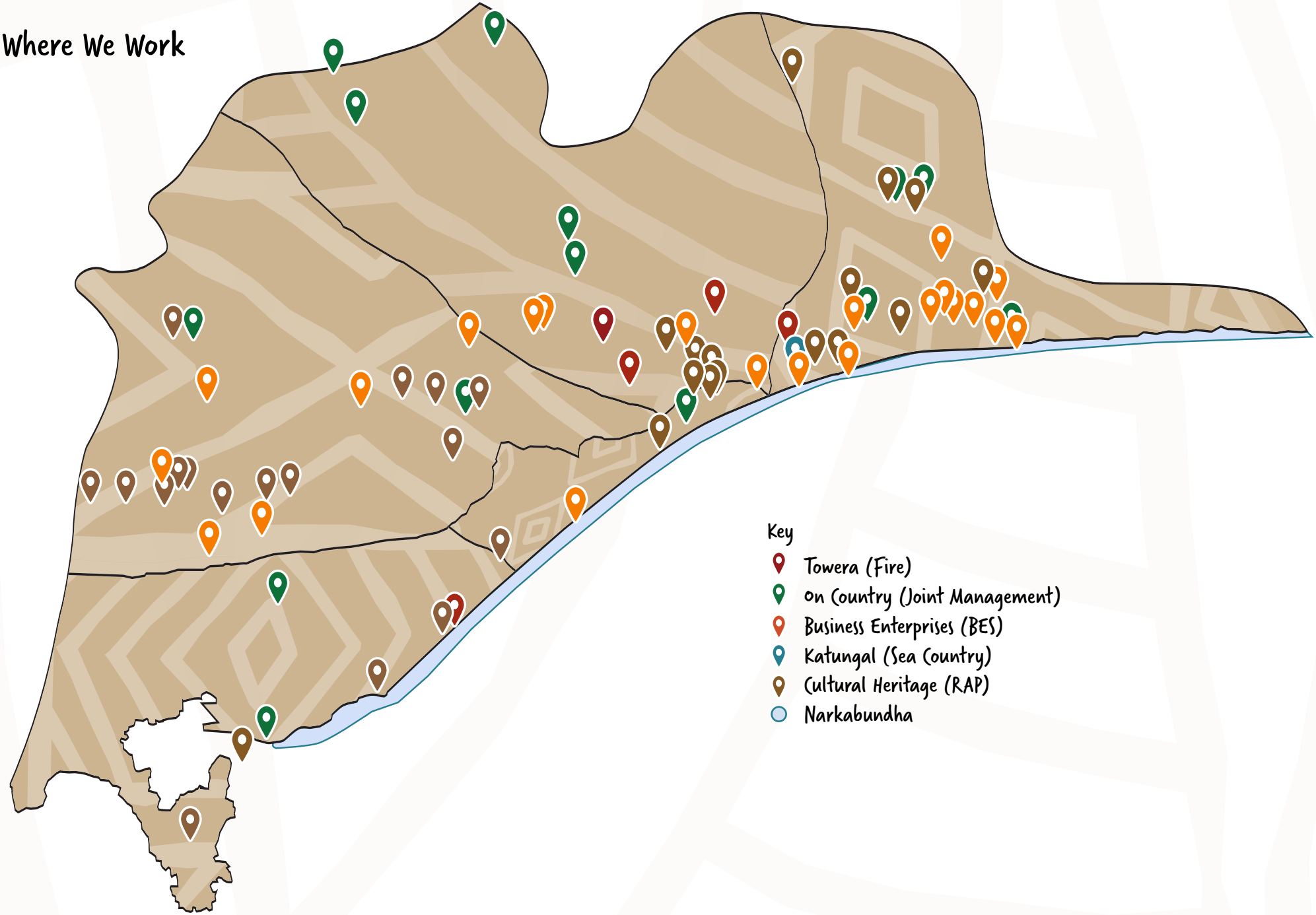







HEAL
COUNTRY


Where We Work





The Knob Reserve, Stratford

Our On Country crews were regulars at The Knob Reserve, carrying out the ongoing work that keeps the area healthy, welcoming and well cared for.

The Knob Reserve is one of the 14 Joint Managed parks and reserves across Country, and GLaWAC is a key member of the Knob Reserve Committee of Management.

In addition to repairs, weed control and regular maintenance by our crews, this past year we also produced a Master Plan for the Knob Reserve that will guide how we care for and manage this special place into the future.

For more info visit gunaikurnai.org/knob-reserve



Edward Hunter Reserve, Moe

Our NRM crew in the Valley designed and built a yarning circle for community at the Edward Hunter Heritage Bush Reserve in Moe.

The project was a deadly collaboration between the Edward Hunter Heritage Bush Reserve Committee, Aunty Michelle Briggs and the local Aboriginal community, with Mick Welsh Dalton and the GLaWAC crew bringing the community's vision to life.

Learn more about this and other projects at gunaikurnai.org/our-yarns/



Narkabundha Sea Country IPA

GLaWAC continued to consult with community about the establishment of the Narkabundha Sea Country Indigenous Protection Area (IPA) along the coastline from east of Wilsons Promontory to the Snowy River.

A Sea Country IPA would give Traditional Owners more power in managing marine and coastal resources, and to care for and protect land and waters for present and future generations.

To learn more visit gunaikurnai.org/our-country/sea-country/





Growing a Skilled Aboriginal Workforce

GLaWAC continues to invest in training and skills development for mob.

This past year GLaWAC staff attended 414 training and education events across 39 different topics – a total of 15,565 training hours delivered.

Most of these opportunities were for On Country staff, but there were also trainings for executive, support and admin staff.

More than three quarters (78.5%) of all participants in the training opportunities were Aboriginal.

These covered a wide range of skills and qualifications – here's just a few:

- Cert IV in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management
- Elements of Shipboard Safety and Coxswains Boat Handling
- Firefighter and Wildfire Awareness
- Chemical Handling and Pest, Weed and Disease Control
- Environmental DNA Testing
- Aerial Suppressant Mixing and Loading
- Conflict, Violence and Aggression Management
- Marine Pest Training

Many of the training sessions for GLaWAC staff were made possible by the generous funding and support of Latrobe City Council's Steps to the Future program.









On Country Rangers - Joint Management

GLaWAC partners with Parks Victoria and DEECA in the management of 14 parks and reserves across Country, from New Guinea Caves and Corringle Foreshore Reserve in the east, to Baw Baw and Tara Bulga national parks in the west.

In FY 2025/26, GLaWAC Rangers partnered with Parks Victoria and DEECA to complete or continue 164 projects on the annual joint management work plan across those 14 parks and reserves.

That included a wide range of tasks, including cultural surveys, new signage, pulling and spraying weeds, maintaining visitor areas, protecting native species, and even park administration.

Reading Country

Although Gunaikurnai Rangers do some of the same work as their Parks Victoria and DEECA counterparts, their role in Joint Management is different.

That role is to see, understand and manage these parks from a Gunaikurnai perspective - a cultural perspective - which only Gunaikurnai Rangers have the ability and authority to do.

As Joint Management continues to evolve, we will be creating more space and time for our Rangers to dedicate to 'reading country.'

Our goal is that Gunaikurnai Rangers have the autonomy to spend time on Country, to read the landscape, and to decide what works need to happen to heal Country and protect cultural heritage assets.





















Deepening Knowledge, Protecting Heritage

As the modern world continues to dig, build and expand, we must protect the Gunaikurnai cultural heritage that rests on Country.

That's the work of GLaWAC's Cultural Heritage team.

Under the Aboriginal Heritage Act of 2006, whenever there is any digging or high impact activity in an area of cultural heritage sensitivity, the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for that area must do a cultural survey of the site and salvage or protect the artefacts - both tangible and intangible - that are there.

GLaWAC is the RAP for Gunaikurnai Country, and it's our Cultural Heritage team that does that work.

This applies to things like new residential subdivisions or hospital extensions, to large industrial projects such as trenches for cables and pipeline, or windfarms.

This past year the Cultural Heritage Monitoring team conducted 31 Cultural Heritage Management Plans and issued 13 Research Permits across Country.

As an example of what this work looks like, our Cultural Heritage Compliance team spent a lot of time at the Delburn wind farm site on Brayakaulung Country, finding and assessing the cultural artefacts that are there and doing what is necessary to protect them.

Working in partnership with archaeologists and research institutions, these big projects are also opportunities to deepen our understanding of Ancestors' movements across Country, adding to the knowledge we pass to future generations.





Protecting Threatened Species

Cats. Foxes. Introduced trout. Climate change. Destruction of habitat.

There's all kinds of things that can push a native animal to the brink of extinction.

That's when Country needs a helping hand.

GLaWAC's On Country Rangers were involved in a number of projects this past year to protect threatened species across Country.

That included the reintroduction of the endangered West Gippsland galaxias into a tributary of the Latrobe River, studying and tracking the vulnerable Pookila at Wilsons Promontory, and monitoring the critically endangered mountain pygmy-possum in the Alpine National Park.

Forming strong partnerships to help heal and protect Country means more good work gets done than we can do alone.

And so we are very thankful for the support of our partners and allies in this work, including Parks Victoria and DEECA, the catchment management authorities across Gippsland, the Aquarium Association Australasia, the National Pookila Recovery Team, Zoos Victoria, Alpine Resorts Victoria, wildlife biologist Dean Heinz, Ecological Geneticist Dr. Andrew Weeks, and the Australian Government's Saving Native Species Program.



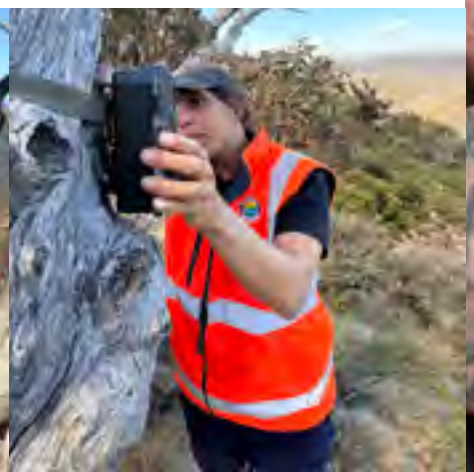














Towera (Fire) Crew Continues to Grow

GLaWAC now has 12 staff trained in fire response, 10 of which are Aboriginal.

This is more than double the number of fire-trained staff we had last year.

This increase is part of our journey toward taking back control of how we use cultural fire to regenerate Country, and heal and connect community.

In FY 25/26 the work of the Towera crew included:

- 10 active rostered General Firefighters involved in bushfire response
- 1131 total hours of fire suppression and planned burning
- 329 total hours of fire response and fitness training
- Cultural burns in Colquhuon State Forest and Moormurng Nature Conservation Reserve

We're also working to change regulations so that Gunaikurnai have more autonomy over when and how we put fire into Country.

Less red tape, more self-determination.

Our goal is to complete four cultural burns each year for the next three years.











From Maintenance to Major Projects

Our Business Enterprise team delivers a wide range of civil construction, landscaping, park maintenance and natural resources management services on Country.

This includes things like fire reduction slashing, clearing walking trails and tracks, mowing and planting, spraying noxious weeds and general maintenance of parks infrastructure.

But the Business Enterprise team is also responsible for some of our more eye-catching work to make Gunaikurnai cultural identity a prominent and visible presence on Country.

This past year that included the installation of yarning circles at Buchan Munji and Balley Hooley Campground, Uncle Dougie Hood's powerful Lyrebird and Wren seat at Glenmaggie Weir Reserve, and his Turtle Table at the Hoddinott Reserve Playground.

Add to that the flood recovery work at Lake Tyers State Park and Buchan Munji, planting several thousand plants to stabilise riverbanks across Country, and the massive job to upgrade Angusvale campground in Mitchell River National Park and visitor areas in Alpine National Park, and it's been a big year for our Business Enterprise crews.

Thanks to the hard work of those crews, and good financial management, our Business Enterprise team went from a significant deficit in 2024/25 to break even this year.













Observing Changes in the Landscape

Our understanding of Country is informed by what we see, and the story those ongoing observations tell us over time. A powerful example of this is our work that combines fox baiting and camera monitoring.

Our On Country and Natural Resource Management Rangers, in partnership with DEECA, conducted baiting and monitoring operations in eight parks and forests this past year.

The target of the baiting was foxes, which threaten native species. Before baits are placed for the foxes, we put motion-sensing cameras up to see what species are around. Only when we know we have a safe and appropriate place to target foxes do we put down poison baits.

At some locations we regularly see Baan (dingo), a culturally, spiritually and ecologically significant species for mob. We regard Baan as an integral part of Country.

And where we see Baan, we see fewer foxes. The apex predator, restoring balance in the landscape. Anecdotal evidence also tells us that baiting and monitoring has led to a resurgence in emu populations, and other positive changes.

"When we started, it was eerie how silent it was out here – there was no birdsong. Now we've noticed that the bird life has come back. The forest is singing again."

Mick Welsh Dalton - On Country Ranger Coordinator









Top Social Media Stories

Storytelling has always been our way of sharing knowledge, celebrating our people and staying connected.

Today, social media is an evolution of that storytelling.

For Gunaikurnai people living off Country, it also provides an important way to stay connected to community, culture and the work happening across Country.

During FY 2025/26, GLaWAC published more than 340 posts across our 3 social media platforms – Facebook, Instagram and LinkedIn – including 33 videos or reels.

On Facebook, which is our most followed platform, we had 1.47 million views and 31,000 interactions with our content, which is a 258% increase from last year.



Tyrone Hayes Selected for Seafood Industry Leadership Program

Views: 47.2k Interactions: 500



GLaWAC Towera Crews on the Front Lines of Bushfire Response

Views: 39.4k Interactions: 361



Deadly Turtle Table

Views: 32.6k Interactions: 716



Bush Café and Aboriginal Art Gallery is Back Open for 2026

Views: 37.7k Interactions: 433



GLaWAC's oyster Farming Trial

Views: 30.6k Interactions: 478

Stories From Around Country



Talikatoor Rock oysters

This past year was a time of very positive growth for our Talikatoor Rock Oysters.

Talikatoor means 'little flood' and was used by Gunaikurnai to refer to the Gippsland Lakes.

The oysters grew at or above the rate expected of commercial oysters. There are currently about 75,000 oysters across five sites, with the majority of these being at market size. Between October 2025 and August 2026 the average weight of oysters grew from approx. 22.7 grams to approx. 35 grams.

Our aim is that Talikatoor Rock Oysters will be available to purchase through the Lakes Entrance Fishermen's Cooperative in 2027.

The work of the GLaWAC oysters team includes monthly measurements and assessment, regular drying and flipping, maintenance of the trial sites, regular water and oyster testing for shellfish quality assurance, grading, sorting and re-bagging the oysters.

With thanks to Craig Ingram and the Victorian Fisheries Authority, and investment from the Fisheries Research Development Corporation.



Fighting Weeds, Healing Country

Our work on Country recognises and respects the ancient relationships across the landscape that create balance.

Invasive plants and animals are a great threat to that balance, and so fighting against those pest species is a key part of our work to heal Country.

We have a number of important partners in the battle against invasive weeds, including Parks Victoria and DEECA, the catchment management authorities, the Trust for Nature and the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee.

One great example of this coalition working together was the removal of the invasive weed Mother of Millions from the Gippsland Lakes Coastal Park.

In ecologically sensitive areas, like the sand dunes along 90-mile beach, we removed the weeds by hand, as this aligns with GLaWAC's approach to healing Country.



garinga d`jimbayang

A group of Aboriginal men increased their cultural knowledge of traditional bush foods and practices this year through our garinga djimbayang 'Growing Traditional Foods on Gunaikurnai Country' project.

Three of our Natural Resource Management Rangers Jake Atkinson, Michael Atkinson and Jared Browne, achieved their Certificate II in Horticulture through garinga djimbayang, and a group of men from Wulgunggo Ngalu participated also.

garinga djimbayang was a year-long cultural and educational journey that saw participants learning about the plants that Aboriginal people have used for food, medicine and cultural practices.

The program included field trips to the Yanun Wanduin Indigenous Garden in Yinnar, Cranbourne Gardens, the Sale Community Seed Garden and the Knob Reserve.

Along the way the fellas received the cultural support and guidance of Uncle Lloyd Hood, and of Aunty Doris Paton, who shared her stories and knowledge about traditional bush foods and medicines that had been passed down through her family.



Energy

Our work in the energy sector has a clear goal.

That goal is to make sure the rights and interests of Gunaikurnai people are taken into account by companies proposing energy projects on Gunaikurnai Country.

This past year GLaWAC increased the work we're doing toward that, meeting with 21 energy companies or stakeholders a total of 74 times.

These meetings with the energy companies were led by Gunaikurnai voices on our Major Projects Negotiation Team - Aunty Lena Morris, Grattan Mullett and Nick Johnson.

A lot of this engagement was with the companies proposing offshore wind projects.

But we were also talking with the proponents of battery energy storage and onshore wind projects, as well as an undersea and underground energy cable proposal, and VicGrid, which is the Victorian Government body responsible for planning and developing Victoria's renewable energy zones and electricity network.

To learn more about our vision for new energy projects on Gunaikurnai Country visit gunaikurnai.org/energy



Deadly in Gippsland 2026

"We're showcasing our Blak Excellence, and that's a powerful experience."

These words by GLaWAC Board Member and local business owner Alice Pepper described perfectly what Deadly in Gippsland is all about.

Since being launched in 2009, Deadly in Gippsland has grown into an annual celebration of the positive economic impact of Aboriginal entrepreneurs and businesses on the regional community.

Hosted by GLaWAC and supported by sponsors, it is also an important place for mob to network and learn about training and employment opportunities.

This year's Deadly in Gippsland was held at the Sale Memorial Hall in February.

"Coming to expos like this is a great way to showcase what we're about as Aboriginal businesses, and the commitment we've got to our community, but also how we participate in the economy," said Ricky Morris, the Director of Pathway Plumbing Services.



Recognition and Settlement Agreement

Finalising a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) between the State of Victoria and Gunaikurnai people was a huge piece of work we completed this past year that will have lasting benefits for community.

It was the result of years of negotiations led by GLaWAC and a Gunaikurnai negotiations team.

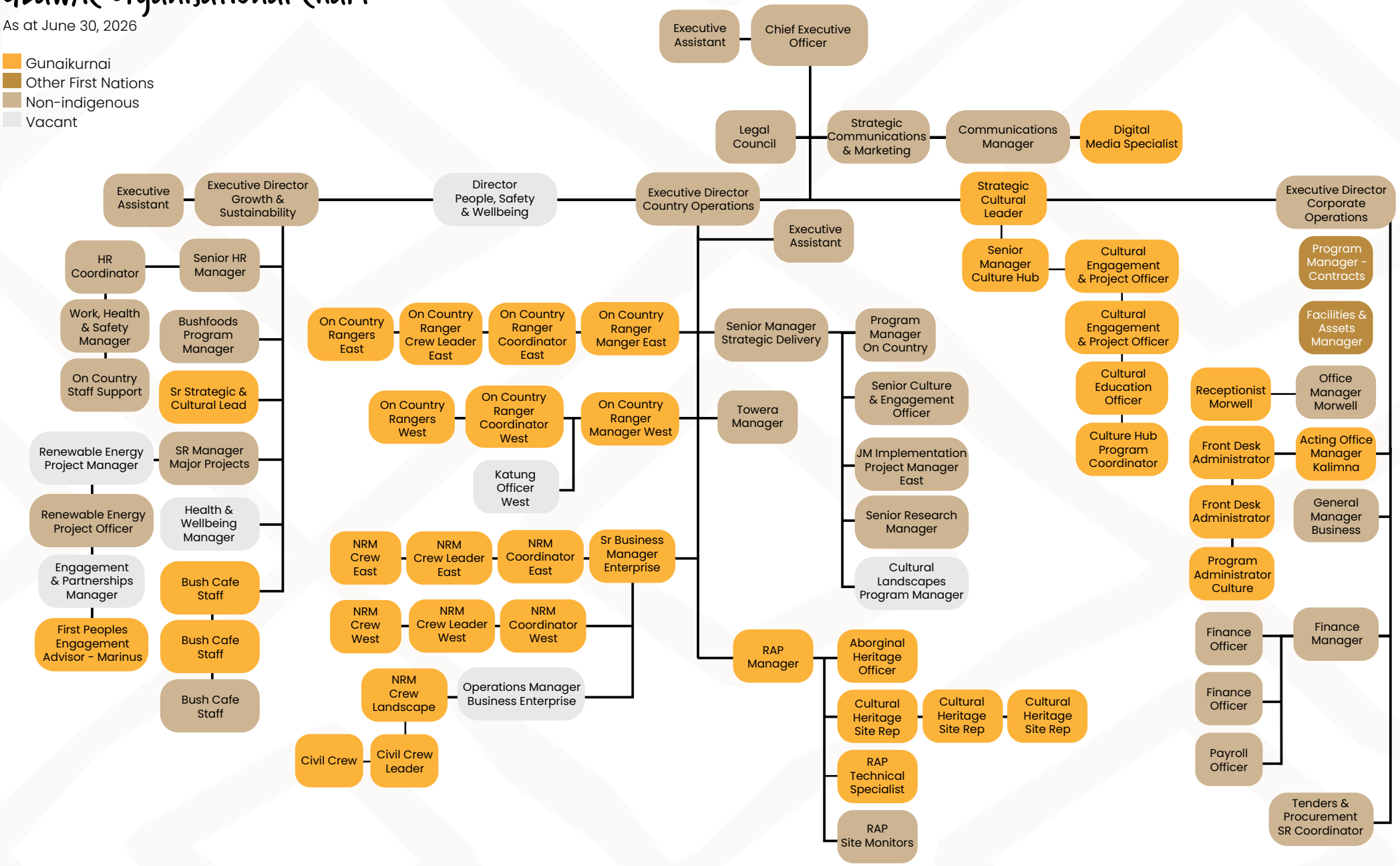
The benefits of the RSA include:

- Funding to expand the oyster program
- Funding to support the purchase and renovation of properties to help GLaWAC keep supporting the Gunaikurnai community
- Natural Resource Management Agreements that give Gunaikurnai people a bigger role in natural resource use and management on Country
- Commitments from the state to keep working with Gunaikurnai people around water allocations, forest produce and bush foods, renewable energy, and coal mine remediation
- A major funding contribution to the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Trust
- Unallocated funding for self-determined use

The GLaWAC Board of Directors is currently considering how best to use this unallocated funding for the long-term benefit of all Gunaikurnai.

GLaWAC organisational Chart

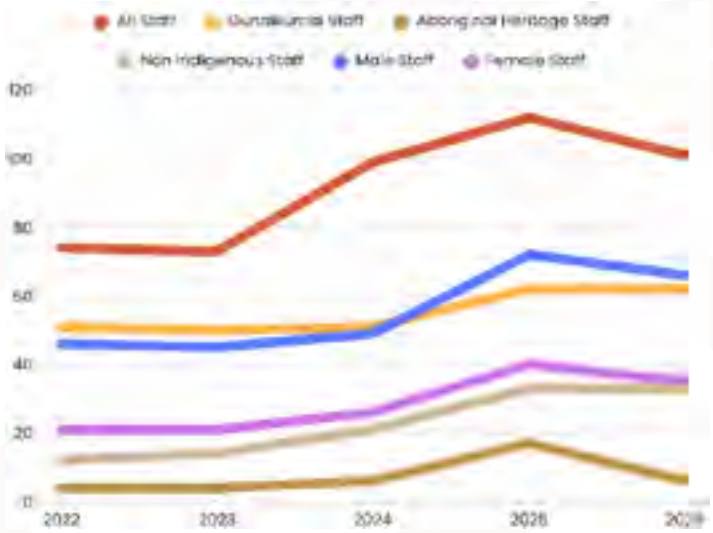
As at June 30, 2026



GLaWAC Staff Breakdown

As at June 30, 2026

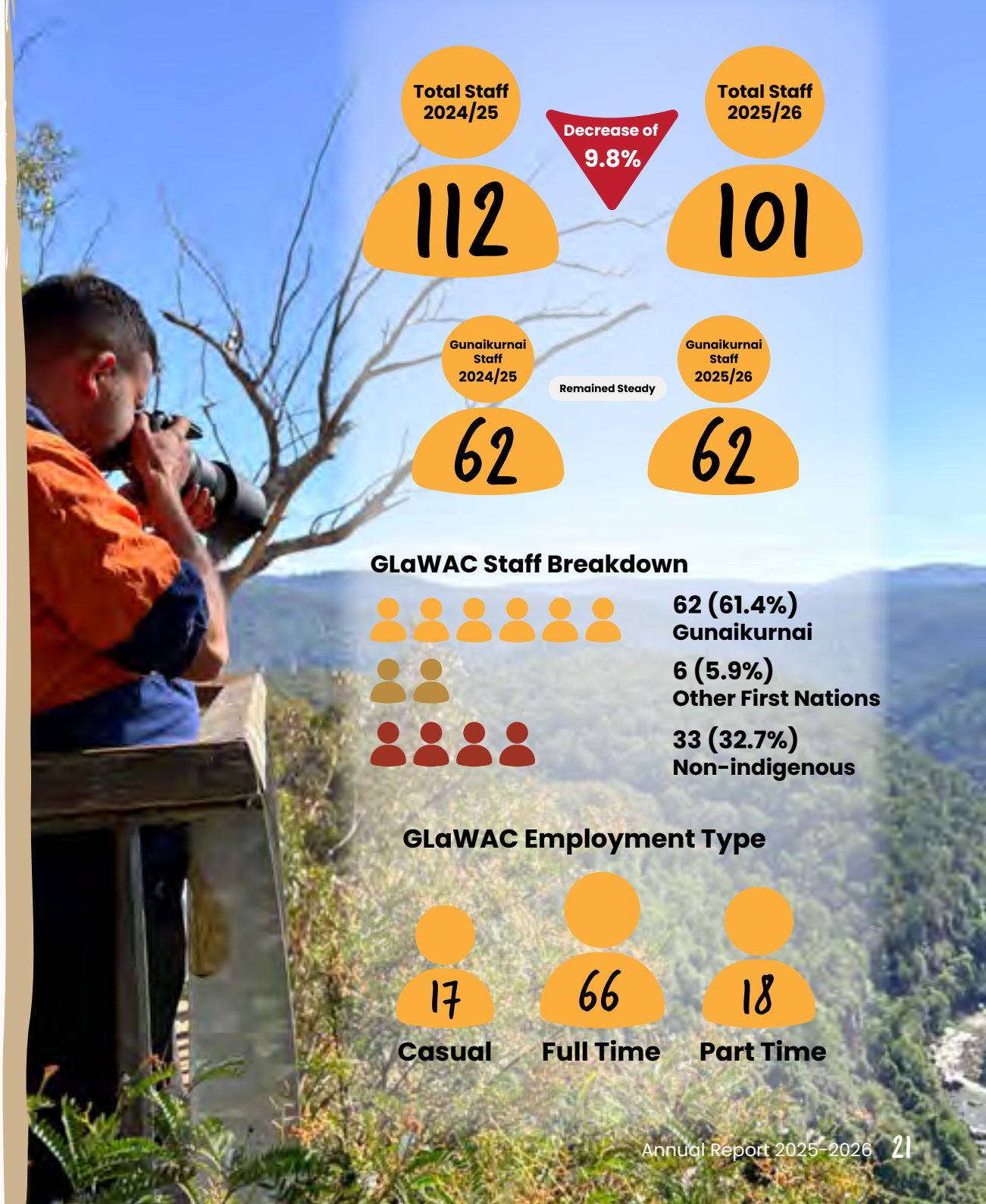
Over the past five years, GLaWAC's workforce has grown from 67 employees in 2022 to 101 in 2026, an increase of 50.7%. This growth reflects the expanding scope of our work in caring for Country, supporting community and creating opportunities for Gunaikurnai people.



Membership

As at 30 June 2026, membership of Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation had increased to 874 members, up from 835 in the previous financial year. This represents an increase of 4.7%, or 39 members.

For more information on how to become a member visit: gunaikurnai.org/our-community/elders-members/



Board of Directors



TROY MCDONALD is the Reserved Seat holder for Gunaikurnai on the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, Gellung Warl, having also served as a general member for the South East.

He has provided his expertise across economic prosperity on the Traditional Owner working group as it relates to the operationalisation of the First Principles Review.

Troy has worked as a volunteer for GLaWAC over the past 12 months, advocating at the state and commonwealth level to promote and lobby for GLaWAC's interests across water, economic prosperity reform and renewable energy.



ALICE PEPPER is a proud Gunnai Traditional Custodian, and very passionate about building strong foundations for her people that will benefit and support future generations. Alice is a third term community-elected member of the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria, now called Gelung Warl, implementing Australia's first statewide Treaty.

Having held several professional and voluntary positions in statewide and regional government departments and organisations, including Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations, Alice is also one of the founding members of the Bairnsdale Regional Unlimited Sports Inc. and a board member there for the last seven years.



BRIAN STEVENS is a proud Gunai man from Orbost, with ancestorial links to Gunditjmara and Monero country. He is a respected Aboriginal leader with more than 35 years of experience in governance, community development, leadership, strategic planning and Aboriginal affairs.

Brian has been an elected representative on the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, and has worked across the Aboriginal community-controlled sector, government and private industry, serving on numerous boards, committees and advisory groups.

Brian is passionate about creating opportunities that support long-term prosperity for Aboriginal people and communities, and provides pro bono advice and mentoring to Aboriginal entrepreneurs, community-led and not-for-profit organisations.



NICHOLAS JOHNSON is a Gunai, Monero/Ngarigo and Gunditjmara man living in south-east Gippsland, and one of the many grandsons of the late Uncle Albert Mullett and the late Aunty Rachel Mullett.

Nick works as the Team Leader, Aboriginal Student Success within the Aboriginal Education Centre at Federation University, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

His educational background is in education and psychology, having completed a Bachelor in Primary Education, Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and a Graduate Diploma in Psychology. Nick is currently studying a Bachelor of Engineering (Electrical and Information Engineering) (Honours) at Federation University.



GLENYS WATTS is a proud Gunai woman living on the traditional land of her ancestors in East Gippsland. She was on the negotiation team for the Native Title Claim and the Recognition and Settlement Agreement for Gunaikurnai, and wants to see GLaWAC keep moving forward with a very strategic approach and a focus on our cultural wellbeing.

Glenys has a background in community development and business governance, having run her own successful business for 11 years and being appointed to Minister-approved boards as well as Aboriginal community-controlled boards.



LYNETTE BISHOP is a proud Gunaikurnai woman from Gippsland who feels privileged and honoured to be able to live on, work on and look after Country - the Country of her Ancestors.

Lynette is very involved in her communities across Gippsland, including 19 years working with Centrelink where she was awarded an Australian Day Award for Outreach Services to communities.

Dedicated to connecting children back to family, community and Country, Lynette has worked with GEGAC, Bairnsdale Regional Health Service and Latrobe Regional Hospital, servicing families and children in care, and ensuring that people can access services they are entitled to.



JULIE MONGTA was a member of our RSA negotiating team. Julie has an extensive history working across many Aboriginal organisations, working to support and better the lives of Aboriginal people. Julie has always had the best interests of Gunaikurnai and First Nations People at heart.

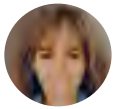


PAULA MORGAN is a proud Gunnai woman and the granddaughter of Merle Thorpe. Her deep connection to culture and community has guided her life's work in Aboriginal health.

As a Registered Nurse, Paula has devoted the majority of her 30-year career to the Aboriginal health sector, including time spent in remote Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.

For the past 21 years, Paula has been a vital part of the Lakes Entrance Aboriginal Health Association (LEAHA), where she began as a community nurse and now serves as Chief Executive Officer.

Her leadership is grounded in a commitment to working alongside her community, empowering them to shape the changes needed to improve local health and wellbeing.



LOIS WHELAN a GunaiKurnai/Monaro woman who has lived on Country all her life, relishing in the beautiful qualities it holds and the comfort it gives. Lois is keen to be a part of the healing of our lands and waters, and the nurturing of our culture. Lois holds Cert III and IV in Learning and Teaching an Endangered Aboriginal Language.

Independent Directors



GARRY ELLIS is an Independent Director with 35 years' experience in the not-for-profit health and community services sector. He has held positions of CEO and CFO, and his tertiary qualifications include Bachelor of Commerce, Master of Business Administration (MBA) and Graduate Certificate of Human Resource Management. He is a Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors.



IAN PORTER spent more than 20 years in the Victorian Government, moving through a wide variety of energy and environment related roles, culminating as Executive Director leading work on climate change and sustainability policy in the mid 2000s. Ian served as Chief of Staff to Minister Lily D'Ambrosio, and as a First Assistant Secretary in the Transport and Infrastructure Department, leading work on net zero transport and infrastructure, as well as portfolio wide data, research and strategy.

A Message from the CEO

The past year was a time of necessary change for GLaWAC.

That change has made us more financially efficient and resulted in a big reduction in our deficit. It has made us more sustainable and secure.

But, during this time of change our excellent staff remain focused on the core purpose of the organisation – looking after Country, protecting and celebrating Culture, and advocating for the hard-won rights of Gunaikurnai people, following in the footsteps of the Elders that helped build GLaWAC.

I see the pride that our staff have in that work. Their professionalism and passion is clear.

The quality of our people is one reason I am very excited for the next stage of our journey.

That next stage will present several new opportunities, not the least of which is making sure the energy transition happening on Gunaikurnai Country benefits Gunaikurnai people.

As a result of our ongoing negotiations with energy proponents and the government, we anticipate this will include real jobs for Gunaikurnai people, and assistance with starting and expanding businesses.

The energy transition has the potential to create massive opportunities for us to increase investments in Country and culture, and provide long-term wealth and prosperity for our community.

Thank you for your support of GLaWAC.

Nick Ashburner – Chief Executive officer

Executive Directors



NICK ASHBURNER is GLaWAC's CEO. His focus is on securing the long-term financial strength of the organisation, providing a platform for Gunaikurnai to pursue their aspirations for Country, culture and community.

Prior to joining GLaWAC in Feb. 2026, Nick spent 10 years working with mob at the Central Land Council, and was part of the executive team at DEECA.



CHAREE SMITH was the Acting CEO from May 2025 to Feb. 2026. Formerly CEO of Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Charee has worked in arts, culture, tourism, and economic development.

As Acting CEO, she guided strategic direction, strengthening organisational resilience, and championing GLaWAC's leadership in land and water management, while advancing self-determination and creating opportunities for future generations.



GRATTAN MULLET SNR is a proud Gunaikurnai man and our Strategic Cultural Leader, leading the development of GLaWAC's cultural strategy and framework in partnership with the Board and Executive.

Grattan strengthens cultural practice through training, advice, and ceremonial events, while supporting Elders, increasing Gunaikurnai membership, and guiding cultural awareness initiatives across the organisation and community.



TANYA TAYLOR is the Executive Director of Growth and Sustainability, responsible for driving economic development, major projects, human resources, and health and wellbeing at GLaWAC.

Tanya leads initiatives that create sustainable business outcomes and new opportunities for Gunaikurnai people, including delivering a five-year strategy and programs aligned with GLaWAC's business priorities and the Aboriginal Economic Development Strategy for Gippsland.



MATTHEW PATERSON is the Executive Director of Country Operations, providing strategic leadership and operational oversight across GLaWAC's On Country, NRM Business Enterprise and Cultural Heritage functions.

His portfolio spans the On Country Rangers, joint management, cultural fire, Sea Country and water programs, natural resource management, civil and landscaping services, cultural heritage and research.



FIONA HAMMOND is the Executive Director of Corporate Operations, leading the delivery of finance, procurement, business services, and contract management functions at GLaWAC.

Fiona drives efficiency and sustainability by improving business systems and processes, overseeing risk and corporate governance, and ensuring corporate services effectively support the organisation's growth and strategic priorities.

Financial Snapshots

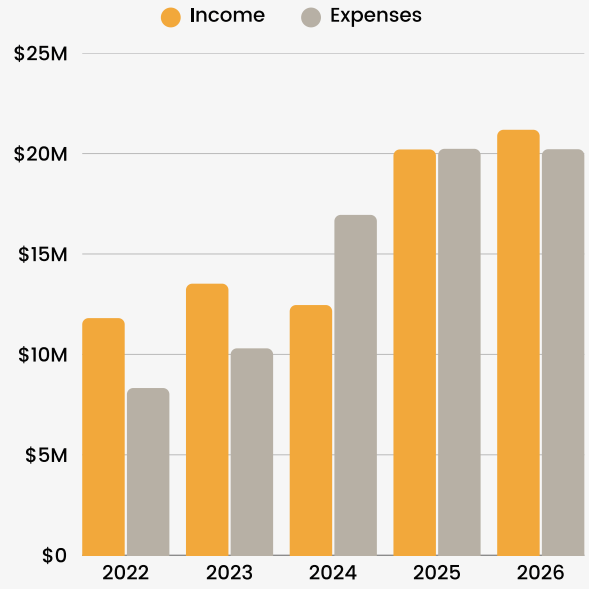
This page has a few snapshots of our Key Financial Metrics for FY 2025/26.

You can download a digital copy of our full Audited Financial Statement at gunaikurnai.org/our-news/publications/ or by scanning the QR code here.

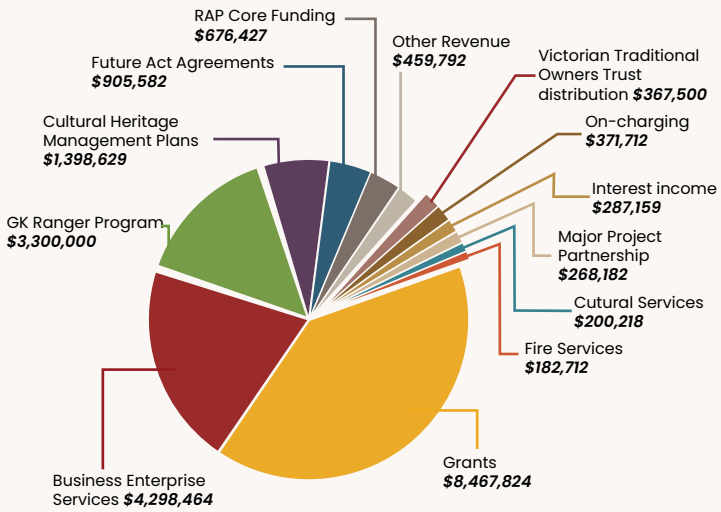
We are also happy to print and mail you a copy of the Audited Financial Statement, if you prefer.

Just call our admin team on (03) 5152 5100 or email admin@glawac.com.au and ask for a copy of the Audited Financial Statement.

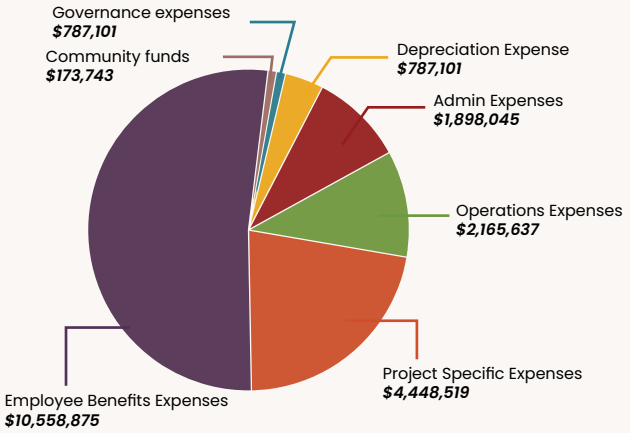
LAST 5 YEARS

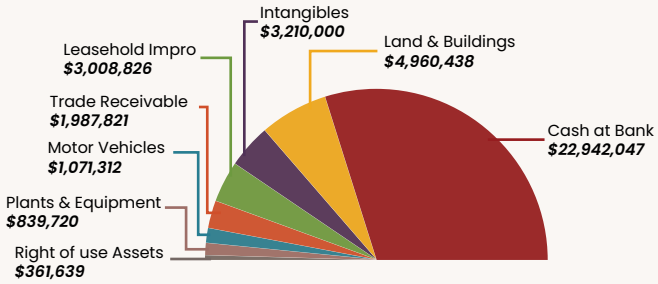


2025/2026 INCOME
$21,184,284

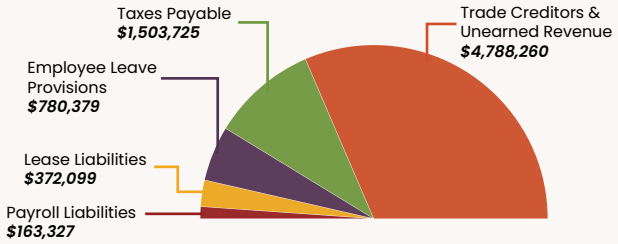


2025/2026 EXPENSES
$20,216,001





WHAT WE OWN = $38,381,803



WHAT WE OWE = $7,607,790

DEFICIT OF CONCERN

(non-funded business activities & corporate overheads)



AMOUNT GENERATED FROM ON COUNTRY WORK **$9.1m**

VALUE OF OUR TERM DEPOSITS
$16m

WAGES PAID TO ABORIGINAL STAFF
$6.1m

MONEY HELD IN TRUST
Settlement Trust Fund
$18.6m

OUR NET WORTH
(cash + assets - liabilities)
$30.7m



DIRECTORS REPORT

Review of Operations of the Corporation

Directors present this report on the Corporation for the financial year ended 30 June 2026 in accordance with section 333-10 of the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 and regulation 22 of the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Regulations 2017.

(a) Review of operations of the Corporation

A review of the operations of the Corporation during the financial year and the results of those operations concluded that the Corporation continued to engage in its principal activities throughout the reporting period, the results of which are disclosed in the Corporation's Financial Report.

The operating surplus of the Corporation for the financial year amounted to $13,054,283.

(b) Significant changes in the Corporation's state of affairs during the financial year

During the financial year, Charee Smith, Acting Chief Executive Officer, completed her appointment, her last day was 6 February 2026. Nick Ashburner was appointed as Chief Executive Officer on 2 February 2026. The Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer provided stability for the organisation throughout the reporting period. There were no other significant changes in the state of affairs of GLaWAC during the financial year.

(c) Statement of the Corporation's principal activities

The principal activity of Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation during the financial year was to carry out its functions and obligations as:

- A determined Prescribed Body Corporate and Registered Native Title Body Corporate for Gunai/Kurnai native title holders in accordance with the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth) and Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (Cth).
- Authorised representative of the Gunaikurnai People for the purposes of the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic) and the Gunaikurnai Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA).
- The appointed Gunaikurnai Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic).
- A charity registered by the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits commission as a public benevolent institution to advance the social or public welfare of Gunaikurnai people.

Principal activities of the Corporation during the financial year were to manage the land, waters and cultural heritage within Gunaikurnai Country, and to build a sustainable business generating income from Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) responsibilities and associated activities.

Other activities undertaken by GLaWAC during the year included commercial operations in Natural Resource Management, Landscaping and Tractor services, Civil Works, and the Bush Café.

Of particular note, a Gunaikurnai RSA Negotiating Team concluded negotiations for a revised RSA.

The negotiated outcomes were approved at a Gunaikurnai full group meeting in November 2025. The outcomes included a new Natural Resources Agreement (NRA), funding allocated to the Gunaikurnai Trust and funding to support self-determined projects and programs for the Gunaikurnai community.

Some rental income was also received for the properties located at Offices 1 & 2, 195–197 Macleod Street and 193 Macleod Street, Bairnsdale.

No significant change in the nature of these activities occurred during the year.

(d) Matters arising since end of financial year that may significantly affect the Corporation

No matters or circumstances have arisen since the end of the financial year which significantly affected or may significantly affect the operations of the Corporation, the results of those operations, or the state of affairs of the Corporation in future financial years.

(e) Likely developments in the Corporation's operations in future financial years

Directors approved an updated 2023-2033 Strategic Plan in May 2026, which will drive the Corporation's operations in future financial years. This includes continued strengthening of the Corporation's economic independence and implementation of the revised RSA. In particular implementation of expanded Gunaikurnai procurement opportunities under the NRA and work to secure and protect Gunaikurnai culture, rights and interests in Country.

Other likely developments in the operations of the Corporation and the expected results of those operations in future financial years have not been included in this report, as the inclusion of such information is likely to result in unreasonable prejudice to the Corporation.

(f) Significant environmental regulation

The Corporations operations are not regulated by any significant environmental regulation under a law of the Commonwealth or of a State or Territory.

(g) Distributions paid to members during the financial year

No distributions were paid to members during the reporting period. The Corporation is a not-for-profit Corporation, and its Rulebook does not permit distributions of money or property to members other than as reasonable remuneration for services rendered.

(h) Distributions recommended or declared for payment to members but not paid

Consistent with item (g), no distributions were recommended or declared for payment to members during the reporting period.

(i) Directors of the Corporation during the financial year

(j) Director's qualifications, experience and special responsibilities

(k) Meetings of the board of directors held during the financial year and each director's attendance

(l) Number of meetings of each board committee held during the financial year

(m) Number of meetings of each board committee held during the financial year

Items (i) – (m) are set out in Table 1 in this report.

Directors have been in office since the start of the financial year to the date of this report unless otherwise stated.

Individual	Role	Appointment date	Cessation Date	GLaWAC Board Mtgs	GLaWAC Board Subcommittee Mtgs	Qualifications / Skills
Troy McDonald	Chair	Nov 2025	Nov 2027	10 of 10	Audit Risk, Finance 4 of 4	AICD Company Directors course Graduate Public Sector mgmt. Master of Business Admin (current)
Lois Whelan	Director	Nov 2025	Sep 2026	9 of 10		Govn. Training
Julie Mongta	Director	Nov 2023	Nov 2025	1 of 5		Govn. Training
Glenys Watts	Director	Nov 2024	Nov 2026	9 of 10		Cert. IV in Business Governance AICD Governance training ORIC - Governance OATSI Director course
Paula Morgan	Director	Nov 2024	Nov 2026	6 of 10	Audit Risk, Finance 3 of 4	AICD Governance training Registered Nurse Diploma of Mgmt. Indigenous Business Master Class Cert IV Training and Assessment
Alice Pepper	Director	Nov 2025	Nov 2027	10 of 10		Diploma in Business Cert II in Drug & Alcohol & Community Services Govn. Training
Nick Johnson	Director	Nov 2024	Nov 2026	8 of 10		Govn. Training Bachelor of Primary Ed. Grad. Dip. of Psychology Cert. IV Training & Assessment. Bach. of Engineering (Electrical) (Honours) – (current)
Lynette Bishop	Director	Nov 2025	Nov 2027	8 of 10		Govn. Training Cert. III in Community Services Graduate Family Therapist Cert. III in Business Cert. IV Marine Licence
Brian Stevens	Director	Nov 2025	Nov 2027	1 of 4		Adv. Cert. in Koori Community Mgmt. & Dev. Introduction to Koori Society & Koori Archaeology AICD Board & Govn. Training Cinergy Conflict Coaching Trained Mentor (Australia Indigenous Leadership Centre) Indigenous Business Master Class Global Coaching Institutes Organisational Coach Training Accred. Coaching Foundations
Ewan Waller	Ind. Director	Annual Appt.	Feb 2026	3 of 5		
Libby Dummett	Ind. Director	Annual Appt.	Feb 2026	2 of 5		
Garry Ellis	Ind. Director	Annual Appt.	May 2027	1 of 2		Govn. Training Cert. III in Community Services Graduate Family Therapist Cert. III in Business Cert. IV Marine Licence
Ian Porter	Ind. Director	Annual Appt.	May 2027	1 of 2		Bachelor of Science (Honours) Fellow of the Inst. of Public Administration (Vic. Branch)
Charee Smith	Sec. / CEO	July 2025	Jan 2026	4 of 4		
Nick Ashburner	Sec. / CEO	Feb 2026	Current	4 of 4		

Table 1: Director and Officer's qualifications, experience, special responsibilities and attendance

(n) Details of each Secretary's qualifications and experience

The details of the Corporation's Secretary are set out in Table 1 in this report. At all times the Secretary appointed by the Directors was the Corporation's Chief Executive Officer with the qualifications and experience for that role.

(o) Any person who was an officer of the corporation and also a partner or director of the corporation's authorised auditor

No person who is or was an officer of the corporation was also a partner or director of the Corporations authorised auditor – Fivefold Financial – during the reporting period.

(p) Auditor's written declaration of independence

A copy of the auditor's independent declaration is set out in the Corporation's Financial Report

(q) Any application for leave to bring or intervene in proceedings on behalf of a corporation

No person has applied for leave of a Court during the reporting period to bring proceedings on behalf of the Corporation or intervene in any proceedings to which the Corporation is a party for the purpose of taking responsibility on behalf of the Corporation for all or any part of those proceedings.

(r) Any proceedings that, during the year, a person has brought or intervened in for the corporation

There are no proceedings that a person has brought or intervened in on behalf of the Corporation during the reporting period.

Options

No options over issued shares or interests in the Corporation were granted during or since the end of the financial year and there were no options outstanding at the end of the financial year.

Indemnification of Officer or Auditor

No indemnities have been given or insurance premiums paid, during or since the end of the financial year, for any person who is or has been an officer or auditor of the Corporation.

Prepared and signed in accordance with a resolution of the Board of Directors:



Troy McDonald - GLaWAC Board Chair

Dated this twenty seventh day of October 2026



Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
27 Scriveners Road, Kalimna West VIC 3909
5152 5100 | www.gunaikurnai.org