



**Wadawurrung**  
Traditional Owners  
Aboriginal Corporation

# Paleert Tjaara Dja

Let's make Country good together 2020 – 2030



Wadawurrung Country Plan





## Caring for Country

"Comugeen budj-o thalikiyu kin bil beng-ordi-ngadak. Ngarrwabil, boron, guli, bagurrk. Comugeen budj-o bengadak ngarr-uk dja, ngubiyt, weagoon gobata gupma wurring-wurring baap beng-ordi-nganak, djarrima murrup-nhuk bengadak.

Gobata Wadawurrung balug jumbuk didabil murrup-nhuk bundjil monomeeth beek-o weagoon. Mutjak-ak noogie n'uder durrallully wa-ngarrak Wadawurrung balug bengadak mirriyu boron-dja gobata-k ying, ngarrimilli, wah-ak, karrung, kuy-a, nyanayit-yanunit, djilenawurr, baap willam beng-ordi-ngadak".

"We deeply respect our people of the past. Our Elders, children, men, women. We deeply respect their knowledge of Country, water, life, their care of the traditions and of each other, we stand with their spirit.

Great spirit **Bundjil** told us to take care of the great life within the land. To only take what you need without selfishness. Wadawurrung shared their knowledge of singing, dance, trade, camps, fishing, hunting, paintings, and homes to us to protect for our future generations. We all need to help".

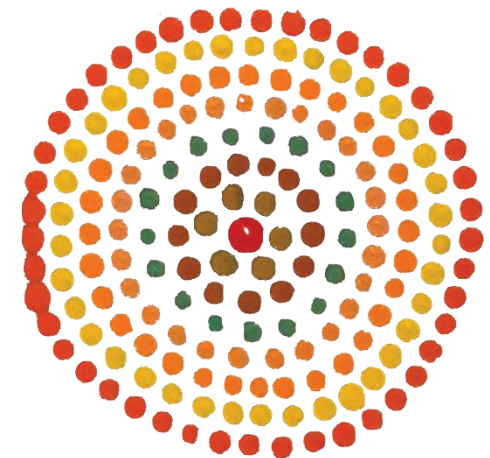
Stephanie Skinner, Wadawurrung Traditional Owner 2019



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**Warning,** please note this document may contain the names and images of people who are now deceased.



## Foreword

As Chair of the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation it gives me great pleasure in presenting our Healthy Country Plan. Firstly, I would like to acknowledge all Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, our Ancestors and pay respect to our Elders past, present and emerging.

Our connection to Culture and Country continues to provide us with the strength to practice and pass on tens of thousands of years of knowledge, as Wadawurrung People.

Caring for our Country, land, sky, and waters, and continual cultural practices are core to our identity as the Traditional Owners of Wadawurrung Country. Our People have endured trauma, violence and dispossession since invasion and have demonstrated an innate ability to continue their cultural practices which has provided strength to ensure our survival. We are connected to our land, our skies, our waterways, and our coastal areas, keeping them healthy keeps our People and Culture healthy.

In *Paleert Tjaara Dja*, Let's make Country good together 2020-2030 -Wadawurrung Country Plan, you can see the result of information gathering from many Wadawurrung People, including our respected Elders. Sharing of knowledge through many gatherings, imparting stories about Country which will now be shared with our future generations. I would like to thank all our People who have come together to contribute to this plan.

This plan articulates how Wadawurrung see Country being cared for and managed over the next 10 years. This includes walking together with government (federal, state, and local) and other key stakeholders to achieve self-determination, ensuring we have sustainable Wadawurrung managed investment in Country going forward.

Our responsibility as the decision makers today, is to ensure a future for generations of Wadawurrung that will follow. This plan is one of the key steps in realising that future.

*Koling wada-ngal* (Let us walk together)

Patrick Fagan

Chair

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation





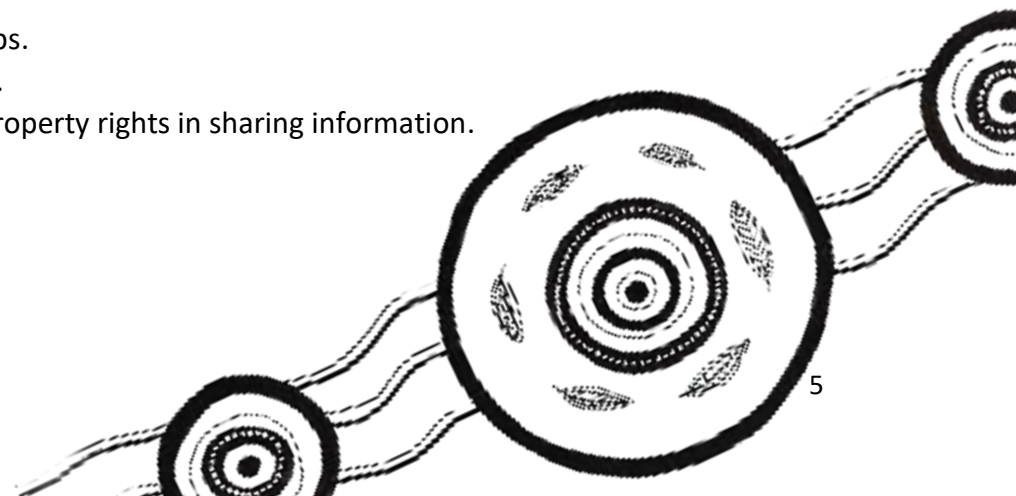
## Principles

Wadawurrung are a proud first nations people committed to working with our members, neighbours, government agencies, land and water managers and the broader community as we protect and heal Country together for all people.

**Paleert Tjaara Dja** – Let's make Country good together 2020-2030 – Wadawurrung Country Plan invites a respectful working, learning and committed sharing together approach based on cultural knowledge and practices.

The principles that guide our partnerships in Caring for Country are:

1. Respect and Acknowledgement for Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and our cultural, ancestral, spiritual and historical connections to Country.
2. Wadawurrung people's right to access and care for Country as an expression of our cultural obligation, responsibilities, connectedness, our well-being and as our economic basis.
3. Country is interconnected, alive with dreaming and creation stories, imprinted with our cultural values and social history – there is no separation between cultural and natural resources and people.
4. Free, prior and informed consent requires genuine engagement from the beginning of decision-making or project planning in a way that is relevant to us, providing timely information and processes that support cultural governance.
5. We seek partnerships that are genuine, are of benefit to Wadawurrung people, are in the spirit of reconciliation, that address past negative impacts and enable self-determination and real outcomes.
6. Providing appropriate and equitable resourcing for Wadawurrung people to participate in their obligation of care and management of Country.
7. Open and honest relationships that sustain effective working partnerships.
8. Wadawurrung Traditional Owners are the holders of cultural knowledge.
9. Respect for and appropriate protection of our intellectual and cultural property rights in sharing information.



## Acknowledgements

The *Paleert Tjaara Dja* – let's make Country good together 2020-2030 Wadawurrung country plan was developed by Wadawurrung Traditional Owners through the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation with the assistance of Conservation Management.



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Art throughout the plan is taken from artworks produced by Wadawurrung artists Trina Dalton-Oogjes, Nikki McKenzie, Jenna Oldaker and BJ O'toole.

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This report is available for download from the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation website: <https://www.wadawurrung.org.au/>

## Key words in Wadawurrung Language

Throughout our Country Plan, we have used **Wadawurrung language** as it is inseparably culturally connected to us, our Country, Culture, kinship and family.

We are reviving our language. Its use teaches our young ones, shares it with the public and encourages its use back on Country. Wadawurrung language was traditionally a spoken language not written, so there can be numerous different meanings and spelling variations.

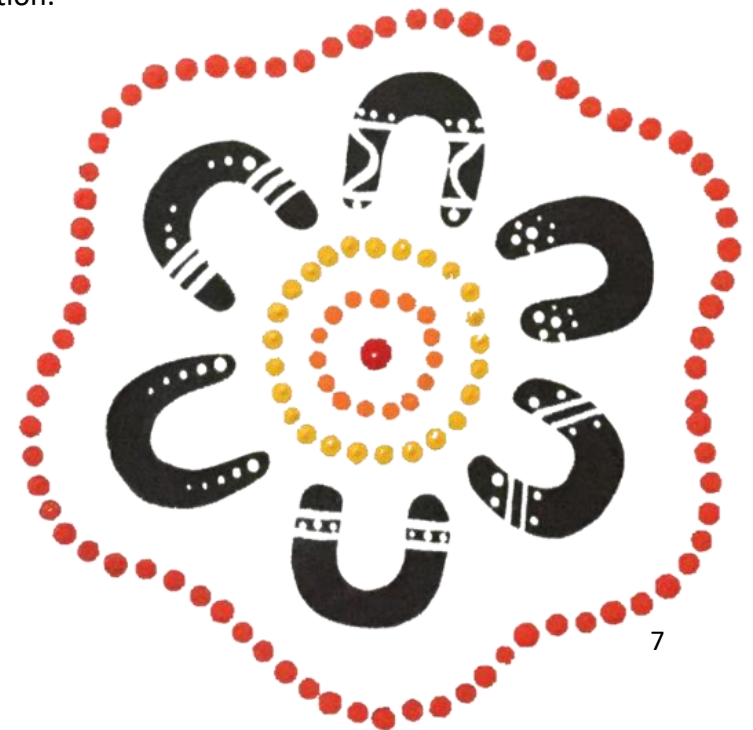
Our language, Country and people are all Wadawurrung, they are all know as Wadawurrung.

We are the custodians of our language and the cultural authority on the correct spellings and usage. Protocols are in place to protect the cultural heritage of Traditional Owners from cultural misappropriation, and cultural heritage is protected under cultural heritage and copyright laws of the Australian State and Commonwealth Governments.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) as the Recognised Aboriginal Party under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Victoria) may assist and provide guidance on the use of Wadawurrung language for publication.

*“If we look, we can see and if we hear language,  
it belongs to country; it’s always been here and describes country.”*

Corrina Eccles - Wadawurrung Traditional Owner





## Wadawurrung Language

Animals		Things		Places	
Eel	<i>beniyak</i>	Spirit/s	<i>murrup</i>	Werribee	<i>Weribbi</i>
Bat	<i>balayang</i>	Fire	<i>wiyn</i>	Torquay	<i>Jan Jook</i>
Crayfish	<i>Bam bam</i>	Country	<i>Dja</i>	Airey's Inlet	<i>Mangowak</i>
Oyster	<i>barnabeel</i>	Water	<i>Ngubiyt</i>	Black Hill	<i>Kareet Bareet</i>
Mussel	<i>murrabal</i>	Bowl or vessel	<i>Tarnook</i>	Geelong	<i>Djilang</i>
Possum	<i>Walart/walert</i>	Basket	<i>beenyak</i>	Beaufort	<i>Yarram Yarram</i>
bandicoot	<i>Kwenda</i>	Mountains	<i>Barre</i>	Lake Burrumbeet	<i>Burrumbeet</i>
Quoll	<i>Yooru</i>	Ocean	<i>warre</i>	Skipton	<i>Worram</i>
Black Swan	<i>Kunnawarra/Connewarre</i>			Little hills	<i>Anakie</i>
Tawny Frogmouth	<i>Waanawal</i>	<b>Feelings</b>			<i>Anakie youang</i>
Cockatoo	<i>Djirnap</i>	Good	<i>Paleert</i>		
Brolga	<i>Porronggitj</i>	Take care/be good	<i>Gobata</i>	Bellarine - resting by the fire	<i>Bellawiyn</i>
Little Raven and often used for crow	<i>Waa</i>				
Kangaroo	<i>Goim/gooyem</i>			<b>Program or Action Names</b>	
Wallabies	<i>Go-yin</i>			Strengthening	<i>Wurrurrwilwa</i>
Wedge Tail Eagle	<i>Bundjil</i>			Taking care of country and waters	<i>Gobata Dja baap Ngubiyt</i>
				Us supporting us – cultural strengthening	<i>Gobata bengadak tjarra</i>
<b>Bushtucker plants &amp; resources</b>				Bringing fire spirit to country	<i>Wiyn murrup goopma dja</i>
basket	<i>beenyak</i>			Taking care of country and waters	<i>Gobata Dja baap Ngubiyt</i>
Manna gum	<i>Lurrup</i>			Us supporting us – cultural strengthening	<i>Gobata bengadak tjarra</i>
Waters or waterways	<i>Yulluk/Yaluk</i>				
Yam Daisy	<i>Murnong</i>				



*“Smoking ceremonies have been on conducted on Wadawurrung country by our ancestors for thousands of years, we continue this cultural practice to welcome visitors, cleanse and protect our country and to acknowledge our ancestors so no harm is brought onto our Country and as a visitor you have safe passage. Wadawurrung Traditional Owners are the appropriate people with cultural permission to do ceremonies.”*

Corrina Eccles

Aunty Vi and Uncle Bryon  
Smoking: photo credit:  
Barwon Water

## Wadawurrung Culture and Country

As Wadawurrung Traditional Owners we live by **Bundjil's** lore to care for Country and all things living as our ancestors have always done. Our **Dja** (Country), is more than a place. Our coastal cliffs, wetlands, grassy and volcanic plains, and people were all formed by **Bundjil** and our ancestor spirits who continue to live in the land, water and sky. **Kareet Bareet** (Black Hill near Gordon) is where **Bunjil** created Wadawurrung people. **Lal Lal** Falls near Ballarat is where **Bundjil** created the waterways and where he returned to before heading to his resting places in the stars continuing to watch over us.

Our **Dja** is interwoven with relationships no matter whether the shape of that relation is human, granite hills, **Waa** (crow) or **Larrap** (Manna gum). Country is filled with relations speaking language, sharing stories and following lore. These spirits they link us back through time in a continuing connection with our past, our cultural practices and our stories. These spirits connect us to our Country and each other which gives us ongoing respect for our obligation to care for our Country.

As Wadawurrung Traditional Owners today we have fought hard to survive the impacts of colonisation and dispossession and maintain this connection with **Dja**. Our Elders suffered deeply, and these impacts continue to be felt across the generations. With our Elders strength and resilience from knowing Country wasn't ceded, they ensured our cultural connections, knowledge and responsibilities for Country continued. Our Elders voices were silenced due to fear and protection for their children as assimilation policies threatened to break us up, but we survived, and their voice and spirit is strong again. It is through their leadership that the next generations of Wadawurrung are standing up proud, practicing and sharing culture and Caring for Country. Having learnt from our Elders the ability to adapt to the changing circumstances of colonisation, has helped us to be resilient and maintain our cultural identity and practices within contemporary society.

We are determined to ensure our cultural authority for making decisions on looking after our Country is recognised and respected. We want to see cultural knowledge as the basis for this management of Country knowing this will help heal our Country and people, for us and for the benefit of everyone living on, visiting and enjoying Wadawurrung Country.



We continue to be on Country, performing ceremonies, dancing and singing in language. We are teaching our young ones the stories, how to hunt and harvest food, medicine and resources sustainably. To continue good practices as our ancestors did with aquaculture systems, **beniyak** (eel) and fish traps. Looking after our waterways and reinstating cultural flows so our **beniyak**, perch, blackfish and yabbies remain.

We are providing leadership in reinstating cultural burning practices so that Country like inland grasslands can again provide our favourite foods like **murnong** (Yam daisy), lily tubers, grass seeds, **Goim** (kangaroo) and **walert** (possum).

We are educating the broader community and retelling the stories of history in our Country to provide a richer understanding of how important our people have been and continue to be in the formation and functioning of modern-day Victoria. We are strengthening our system of governance, building our cultural businesses as an economic base. Caring for Country is essential for maintaining these relationships and connections, for passing on cultural knowledge and practices to our younger generations and maintaining our cultural identity.

*"Did you know that Geelong is known for its wool textiles but Wadawurrung people were weaving, sewing and making clothing for thousands of years like possum skin cloaks." Corrina Eccles*



**walert** skin – cultural gift - photo Melinda Kennedy



**Lal Lal** Falls – photo Al Dermer

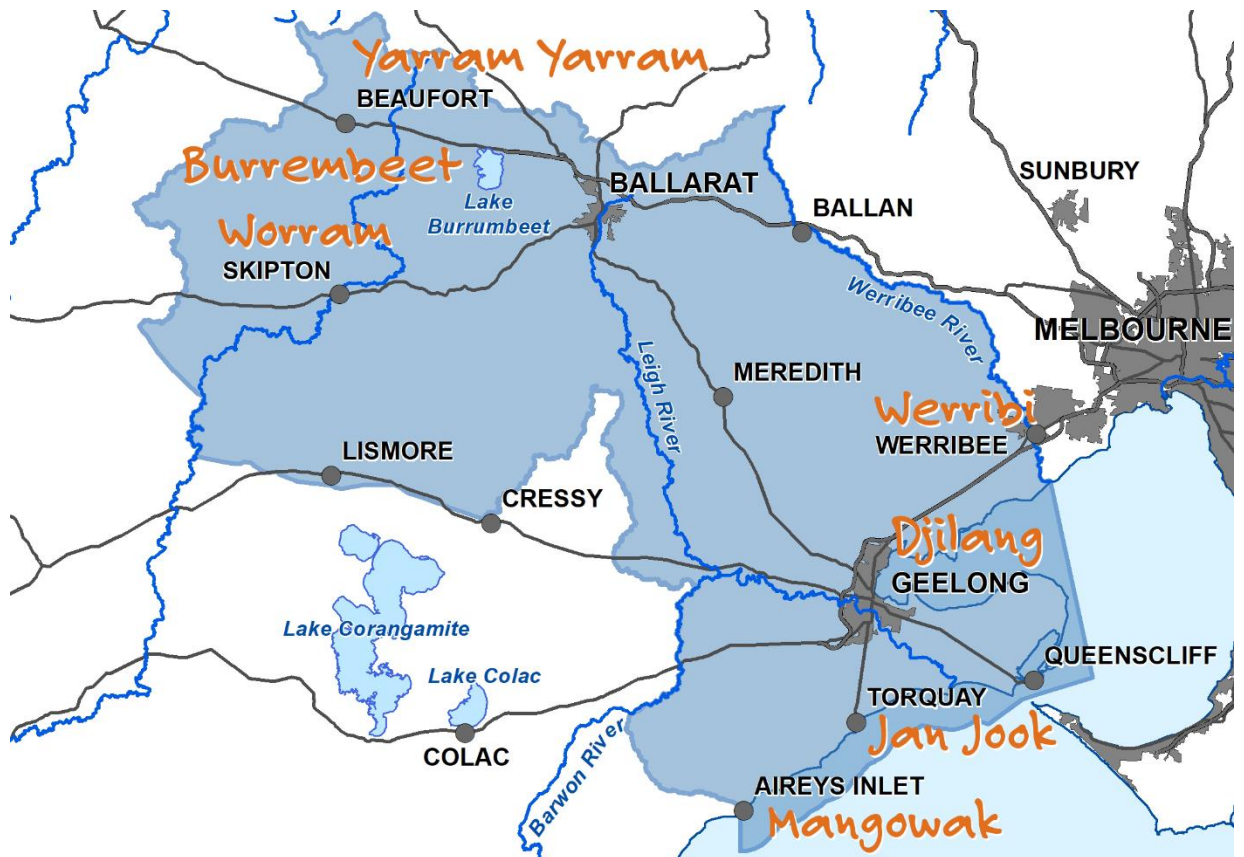
## Our Country



1 million hectares

80% freehold

20% crown lands



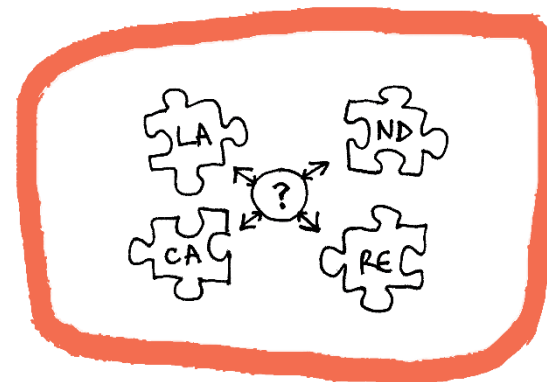
Wadawurrung Country encompasses an area from the Great Dividing Range of Ballarat, the coast from the Werribee River to Mangowak (Airey's Inlet), including Djilang (Geelong), Ballaarat (Ballarat), Torquay, Jan Jook, the Bellarine Peninsula and Surf Coast. This plan is for our Country as currently defined by our Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) map and responsibilities and covers over 10,000 square kilometres or 1 million hectares. This area may change as Treaty and other land and water negotiations progress.

There are the imprints of our ancestors across this interconnected cultural landscape. The Mt. Rothwell and Little River stone arrangement is significant as a place of ceremony linked to our seasonal calendar. Nearby are the remains of our living spaces: our homes in the basalt stone hut, ovens and hearths. Across our Country are stone tool making sites, scar trees and ceremony places. Our people modified the basalt rocks to construct channel, weirs and dams as a system of water management to trap, store and harvest fish and eels.

A mass of stone tools are found throughout our Country today which form part of our cultural heritage.

Many of the place names are derived from Wadawurrung language. Geelong comes from **Djilang**, which means tongue of land or peninsula. Moorobull from **Murrabul** meaning mussel, Connewarre from **Kunuwarra** meaning black swan and **You Yangs** from **Wurdi Youang** meaning big hill.

Our has diverse landscapes from the hill ranges to grassland plains, down to coastal forests, heathlands and ocean. Much of the plains have already been converted into agricultural land and urban areas but as the population expands there is more pressure placed on water sources, more land is converted and more pests are introduced. Having many different land managers makes coordination of Country management difficult.







*“These paintings retell the stories of history of our people on the goldfields. It gets our culture across.”*

Wind and Sky – Aunty Marlene Gilson – Wadawurrung Elder

## Our Journey

From the early 1800s the lives of Wadawurrung people became permanently changed when Europeans took our rich Country that provided year-round abundance of food. The grassy plains, waterways, wetlands, coastal and sea Country were taken over by squatters, eaten by sheep and cattle and cleared for farming and urban development.

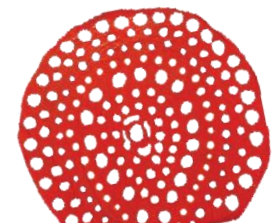
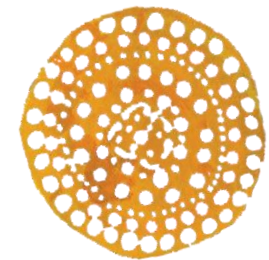
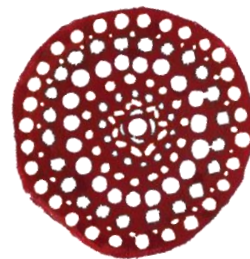
Our Country with its veins of gold was dug up leaving it disturbed and turned upside down and full of holes.

Our coastal Country became home to the sealing and whaling industry with **Djilang** (Geelong) as a major township and port.

Our Country contributed to much of the wealth that Victoria was built upon and prospers from. Our people have always fought to remain on Country.

Through these dramatic changes our relatives adapted their cultural knowledge and skills to remain living on and Caring for Country to survive. They became workers on our Country in whatever way they could. Some of our people worked in the gold fields as miners, bark cutters, child minders and fur merchants selling possum and kangaroo skins.

Other families became workers on pastoral stations, women continued to weave and sell baskets.



European interactions had a devastating effect on Wadawurrung ancestors that continue to be felt deeply by our people today. Dispossession, disease and massacres decimated our people despite the efforts of our warriors and resistance fighters. The thousands of Wadawurrung in clans and family bands were diminished to a fraction of our population, around 70 individuals.

Smaller groups of our people joined larger ones until one main group remained. Laws and government acts strongly controlled all parts of our lives throughout these times.



**Banongil** station overview – photo Sarah Eccles

The Wadawurrung today are the seven family groups, the descendants of John Robinson our apical ancestor, numbering approximately 600 people. John was the son of Wadawurrung Elder, **Canobeen** – Queen Mary of Ballarat (or **Borriyallock**) and John spent much of his time in the 1800s on the **Terrinallum**, **Booriyallock**, Mt. Emu and **Banongil** stations near Skipton in the north-west of Wadawurrung Country with his parents and people.

We have connections with our neighbouring Traditional Owner groups in northern and central Victoria. Including the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung, Bunurong, Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung together we are known as the Kulin Nations, sharing similar languages, common creation stories and joint cultural ceremonies and events.

Wadawurrung Traditional owners today are spread across Country in areas such as Ballarat, Gordon, Mortlake, Geelong and Torquay with some living in other parts of Australia but maintaining spiritual and familial links by returning to country frequently.



Some of our relatives were forcefully removed from their families as children. Recent history has damaged the relationship we have with our Country and each other. These impacts are still felt today and resonate through our generations and daily lives.

The strength, resilience and leadership of our Elders coming together against many challenges to our identity and culture became a way for Wadawurrung people to regain our voice and our stories. It became a way to pass on knowledge and empower the next generations to look after our Country and culture, spiritual and familial links with Country. From a few Elders meeting around a coffee table in the late 1990's our representative organisation was born. Giving us a voice and way to look after our culture and country to advocate for our people's needs.

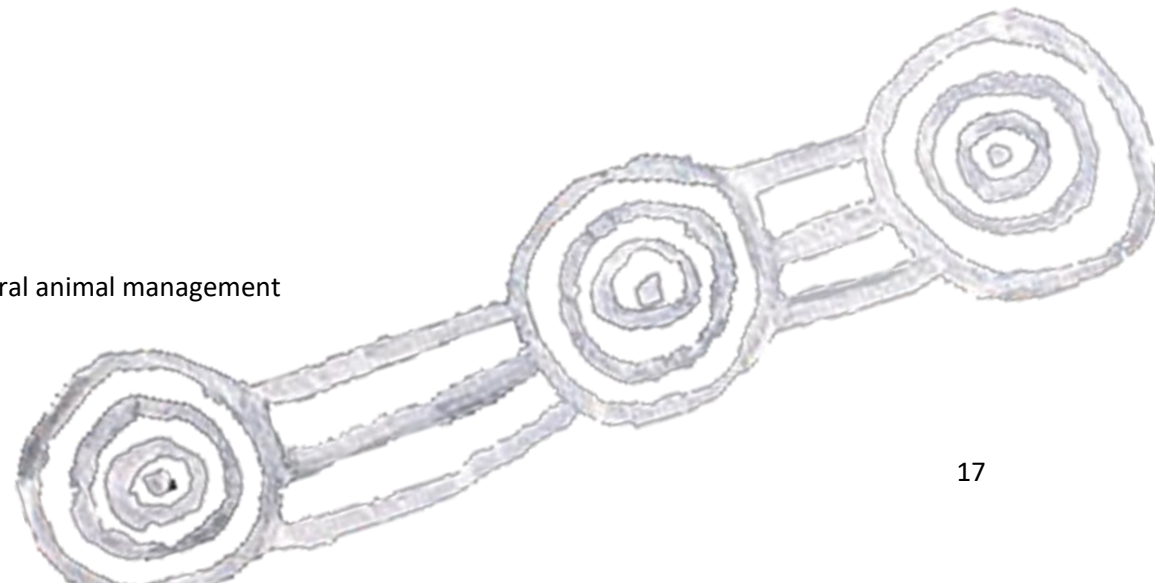
This organisation, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) was registered in 1998 and appointed in May 2009 as a Registered Aboriginal Party with statutory rights and under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. This means we are the legally recognised corporation for working with as custodians, decision makers and knowledge holders for looking after our cultural heritage and Country.

WTOAC has over 300 hundred members and its role is to respond to the needs of the Wadawurrung community and to coordinate the activities, resources and partnerships necessary to protect and strengthen culture, manage land and sea Country and support community health and wellbeing.

Wadawurrung corporation has grown significantly over the past 5 years with many achievements in looking after our culture and Country since its establishment. It has increased its ability to provide a wide range of professional services.

These include:

- Cultural heritage assessments, management plans, protection and management works
- Welcome to Country & smoking ceremonies
- Artworks and linkages to Wadawurrung artists
- Cultural education and awareness workshops
- Dance and cultural practices workshops
- Wadawurrung language and cultural interpretation advice
- Cultural advice into environmental, urban and water plans
- Reconciliation Action Plan development
- Caring for Country services - cultural burning, weed, water and feral animal management



## Our Wadawurrung Country Plan

The **Paleert Tjaara Dja** – Let's make country good together 2020-2030 –

Wadawurrung Country Plan is our collective dream and direction for the future of our people and Country. It tells the story of what is important to us, and what we need to do about it. It will be a guide for building upon our cultural heritage management work and progressing our broader Caring for Country aspirations.

The plan will also help us strengthen our people's cultural knowledge and education to be able to develop our land and sea management program, pursuing purchases, access and co-management arrangements for Country. This can provide our people and future generations a foundation for protecting our culture and Country and have culturally appropriate social, cultural and economic development opportunities.

The plan will help guide our Treaty, Traditional Owner Settlement Act and Native Title negotiations, and our conversations with government, and other partners.

We used the Healthy Country Planning approach, which is based on the Open Standards for the Practice of Conservation, an international best-practice adaptive management framework for developing conservation management plans.

Healthy Country Planning is the adaption of this for use in Australia amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It takes a participatory, community strengths-based approach to planning. Other communities who have used this tell us of how valuable it has been for them.

<http://www.natureaustralia.org.au/science-in-action/conservation-planning/healthy-country/>



Generations of Wadawurrung people on country at Lake Connewarre photo Al Dermer

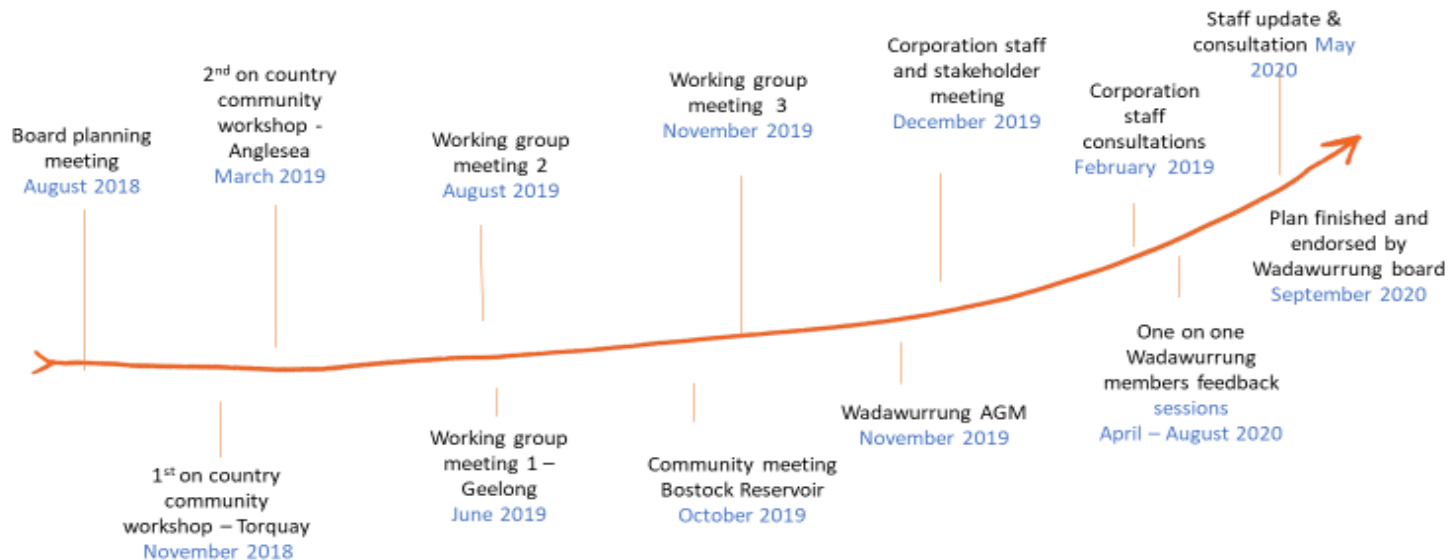


Moorabool river: photo credit Barwon Water

## Developing the plan together

Our Country plan was developed over two years beginning with a planning meeting with the Wadawurrung board in August 2018. This was followed by on Country community workshops that provided us the time to strengthen our relationships with each other and Country. While identifying what our collective dream was, the values important to us and what was threatening the health of our Country and people.

A working group was formed with representatives from family lines that worked on what we are going to do about this, the goals, strategies and indicators. Community meetings and one on one discussions with Wadawurrung members provided feedback and further input. The timeline below shows how we developed the plan together.



A 15-page visual summary version of this plan has been produced to help in sharing our plan. It is downloadable from the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation website <https://www.wadawurrung.org.au/>

### Video to tell our story

Videos are a good way to communicate to our Wadawurrung members but also to the broader public. We employed Wadawurrung people to help gather stories, images, create artworks and develop a video series. There are five videos in the series which we used to both communicate with Wadawurrung members about the plan and getting involved and to share what's in our plan.

There is the **Paleert Tjaara Dja** - let's make country good together 2020-2030 - overview video. This is available on our website as well. <https://www.wadawurrung.org.au/>

Then four shorter videos are:

1. Introduction to country
2. Introducing the Country plan approach
3. Vision, Scope, Values & Threats
4. Programs & Goals



## Our shared Vision

*Wurrgurwilwa gupma bengadak Wadawurrung wurring-wurring baap dja*

All people working together to make Wadawurrung Country and Culture strong



# Wurrurrwilwa gupma bengadak Wadawurrung wurring-wurring baap dja

All people working together to make Wadawurrung Country and culture strong.



Wadawurrung culture and people

Enterprise and employment

Wadawurrung cultural sites and places

Bush tucker, medicines and resources

**Yulluk**  
Waterways, Rivers, estuaries and wetlands

Inland country

Coastal country

**Warre**  
Sea country

Native animals

“These are the important things that we want to look after”  
**OUR VALUES - BUILDING BLOCKS**



Lack of capacity

Lack of recognition

Vandalism

Inappropriate visitation

Urban development

Lack of coordination between land managers

Location of windfarms

Water Extraction

Sea level rise

Drought

Cinnamon fungus

Weeds

Foxes and Cats

Rabbits

Rising sea temperatures

Bushfires

## THREATS TO OUR VALUES

“There are lots of threats that stop our values from being healthy but some are worse than others”



### Gobata Dja baap Ngubiyt Taking care of Country and waters

- Caring for Country Team
- Cultural Values Management
- Co-management
- Dja and Yulluk (Country and Water) Acquisition and Management
- Cultural Burning
- Representation on planning boards, committees and advisory groups
- Cultural Heritage Management (Physical artefacts)



### Gobata bengadak Hjaava

#### Us supporting us – Cultural Strengthening

- Culture and language strengthening Program
- Keeping Place – A safe place for our cultural resources, for Wadawurrung to practice culture
- Cultural Centre – Sharing and education and Enterprise
- Wadawurrung cultural education and language
- Elders Support Services



### Wurrurrwilwa Wadawurrung Corporation Strengthening Wadawurrung Corporation

- Employment and mentoring
- Enterprise development & support
- Recognition and Respect for Wadawurrung people, Treaty
- Engage with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) members
- Strengthen governance and systems in WTOAC
- Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

## 3 PROGRAMS / 18 STRATEGIES

“These are the 3 programs we have decided to focus on to reduce the worst threats and improve the health of our values”







Tarnook for welcome to Country ceremony - Photo credit Barwon Water

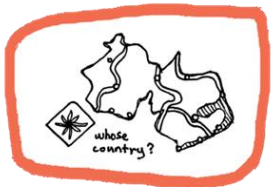
Our plan has 4 key parts that guide us in progressing our cultural heritage and Caring for Country aspirations:



**Our shared Vision** of a healthier future for Wadawurrung people and Country.



Our **9 Values**, the really important things we need to look after to achieve our vision.



**16 Threats** we need to reduce to make our Values healthy.



**3 Programs** and **18 strategies** what we have decided to focus on to reduce the threats and improve the health of our values.



## Our Values – are what we want to keep healthy

Values is just another way of saying 'the main features we want and value on Wadawurrung Country'.

They are the elements that keep Country healthy and are important for us to look after. Values can be cultural, ecological, or economic and livelihood based.

All of Country is important, but we have limited money, time and other resources, so these are what we see as a priority to look after. We came up with a list of nine values which are important to us. We also thought about how healthy our values are so we can consider what is needed to make them even healthier.

We collaborated and identified what makes our values healthy and how we will measure that so that we can tell if they are improving in health or getting worse. We have chosen indicators that will help us to measure the health of our values like a doctor taking blood pressure to see if our heart is healthy.

### Key to health of values



**Very Good** – as healthy as it can be



**Good** - might need a bit of support



**Fair** - needs a lot of support



**Poor** - needs urgent attention



## Wadawurrung culture and people

We are the protectors and carers of this Country and this Country protects and cares for us. We belong to and are spiritually connected to this Country and this Country is part of us. We are inseparable, no matter where we are, we are bound together. When Country is sick, we are sick. We talk to Country in language to help us both heal. Our stories, dances and songs keep us strong in our culture. Our lore and law guide us in keeping our people and Country connected and healthy.

For a long time, we haven't been able to practice our culture and speak our language freely, but now we are learning to stand proud again and teach our children our cultural ways; how to weave baskets, craft spears, prepare possum skin cloaks and perform ceremonies.

We are committed to connecting our people, strengthening their connection and knowledge, our people know their identity, who they are and where they belong.

### Current Health:



**Goal:** By 2025 70% of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners have strong cultural connection and knowledge, we are practicing culture and speaking language.

### Indicator:

- % of Wadawurrung people speaking to each other in language
- Participation in community events

*“How we connect with the spirit of our ancestors is what connects us”*

Aunty Vi - Wadawurrung Elder





***“By touching the scars on the tree, you are connecting directly with your ancestors”***

Uncle Bryon Powell, Wadawurrung Elder – Scar Tree

Photo Credit Sarah Eccles



## Wadawurrung cultural sites and places

There are many physical (tangible) places that have the imprint of our ancestors living on Country like stone huts and stone arrangements, rock wells, artefact scatters or stone tool making sites. There are ochre pits, living places, oven hearths, rock and spear grinding grooves, scar, birthing, cooking and ring trees, geoglyphs, rock art, mens and womens ceremony places.

Living places are made up of the midden sites, discarded food wastes from many meals in the one location. They are next to rivers, lakes and bays or in the sand dunes by the ocean. Depending on where they are found middens can contain all kinds of **kuwiyn** (fish), stone tools, shellfish, animal bones and even fishing hooks. Today the living places show us what the different clans ate in the various locations that Wadawurrung people lived and camped.

There are many more cultural places that are intangible and also carry the imprint of our ancestors. We can feel them in places where our songlines pass through and in the places in our creation stories. In this way all of Country is connected.

### Current Health:



**Goal:** By 2029 Wadawurrung people are involved in the management of all known sites.

### Indicator:

- % of known sites protected





*"Educating people of cultural ways, connects them to care for Country too."*

Corrina Eccles  
Photo Corrina Eccles



## Enterprise and employment

Before Europeans came into our Country, thousands of our Wadawurrung people lived in large family groups as an organised community with agricultural and aquacultural practices as a social and economic base.

Our Country with its bountiful resources sustained our people and enabled them to prosper. Past and present policies prevent us from fully benefitting from our Country's resources. This also prevents us from caring for our people and Country in the way we would like. Wadawurrung people are spread all over Australia and work in a range of jobs but there is only a few working in the Corporation on Wadawurrung Country. We will seek ways to have our Country once again as the rightful economic basis for our people's enterprise and employment. We are developing a Caring for Country team and enterprise so Wadawurrung people can be contracted to look after Country, to further looking after cultural places, to lead cultural burning and fire management.

We want our people to further develop their cultural education, art and tourism businesses. We bring our traditional knowledge into current businesses and pursue aquaculture and agricultural enterprises with products that are culturally important to us and help heal Country. We will integrate traditional Aboriginal perspectives into contemporary landscapes and designs. Which represent our cultural architecture design that represents our cultural connections, stories and language into the housing estates and infrastructure development on Country.

### Current Health:



**Goal:** By 2030, 60% of Wadawurrung people who want to work on Country have jobs or businesses.

### Indicators:

- Number of Wadawurrung owned businesses
- % of Wadawurrung people employed on-Country





***“Our ancestors were innovative; the use of warrigal greens is the first recorded use of insulation technology for shelters, it was used as a fire retardant and is still eaten as bush tucker today”***

Melinda Kennedy

Melinda, Tammy and Zade, Wadawurrung people carrying on cultural practice of *buniya* eel traps photo - Corangamite CMA





## Bush tucker, medicines and resources

Our Country is our supermarket, hardware store, clothing store and pharmacy. **Murnang** (murnong or yam daisy), which is similar to the sweet potato eaten today was once plentiful and nutritious. It can be eaten raw but is usually cooked in baskets. Women used digging sticks to remove the tubers and turn the soil.

Most of the large animals, including **Go-yin** (wallabies), **Goim** (kangaroos), **Walert** (possums), ducks and swans were hunted and processed by men using boomerangs and spears. **Buniya** (eels) were caught in eel traps (tubular-shaped baskets) and water birds were caught in nets that our women wove and made from plant fibres, a practice we continue today. The sea provides bountiful sources of crayfish, abalone, mussels, oysters, pipis and fish.

Many plants are used as medicines. Black wattle gum resin was used for treating diarrhoea and applied to wounds to prevent infection. Grass trees have many uses the leaves are good for thatching, the flower spikes make spear shafts, and the sap makes glue and incense.

They are **Wiyu** (fire) tree from which fire is made.

### Current Health:



**Goal:** By 2030, there is enough of Wadawurrung People's favourite bush tucker.

### Indicator:

- % of Wadawurrung bushtucker available







### Kuwiyn (Fish) Traps

**Kuwiyn** traps are a cultural practice and knowledge continued to be used for generations. They were made beside rivers, lakes and tidal marine locations.

Some were circular in shape extending from the shoreline and others straight across rivers and streams.

Materials used included stones, branches, sticks, reeds and clay.

In flood waters or high tides **kuwiyn** and **buniya** (eel) would swim into the traps and remain inside as the water lowered again, making it easy to collect the **kuwiyn** and **buniya**.

Tammy Gilson – **buniya** eel trap in Morabool river cultural flows project.

Photo credit Corangamite CMA



## Yulluk (Waterways, Rivers, estuaries and wetlands)

*All our waters are living sources from Bundjil – the Karringalabul Murrup, the Creator spirit. He created all you see. Our waters were made for our survival, the survival of all things living.*

Melinda Kennedy, Wadawurrung Traditional Owner

Our main river systems are the Barwon/Moorabool, **Yarowee** and Leigh rivers or **Barre Warre Yulluk**. **Yulluk** (great river) that runs from the **barre** (mountains) to the **warre** (ocean), and our stories tell of these connections. The name Barwon is derived from **parwan** meaning 'magpie' or 'great wide'.

Fyansford is a significant cultural place where the Barwon and Moorabool meet.

The chain of ponds from the Barwon River to Reedy Lake, Hospital Lake, Lake Connewarre and Estuary Bay is connected through water and our **Connewarre** (Black Swan) Dreaming. The Connewarre Wetland Complex is internationally significant for wader and shoreline birds and forms part of the Port Phillip Bay (Western Shoreline) and Bellarine Peninsula RAMSAR Site.

Our waterways were like our highways, they were how Wadawurrung people moved around Country.

Our people used canoes or in calmer waters, **Murriyans** bark floats, or punts pushed by long poles to gather the abundance of food. On the natural rises along the waterways our people camped and caught eels, other fish and waterbirds to eat. Important decisions were made on the banks of these waterways by our Ancestors. They were important living and meeting places. Just as they are today.



## Yulluk animal life:

- 22 native and recreational fish species, including Estuary Perch and Australian Grayling
- 50 mammal species including the Platypus and Swamp Wallabies

## Current Health:



**Goal:** By 2030, there is enough water in the waterways of **Barre Warre Yulluk** that it flows through the system, without barriers and is clean enough to drink.

## Indicators:

- Water Quality
- Amount of water
- Cultural flows
- % of economic access to water
- Number of artificial barriers in waterways







*You Yangs* photo credit Sarah Eccles



## Inland Country

Our inland country includes western volcanic plains and grasslands, with their temperate grasslands and grassy eucalypt woodlands once had enough food and resources for us to live here permanently all year in our stone huts as a community in family groups. The grasslands were full of food grasses, and our women harvested roots and tubers, like **Murnong** and bulbine lily with their digging sticks. Our Country is home to many different types of snakes, lizards, frogs, moths, birds and mammals. **Kwenda** (Bandicoot) or **Yoon** (spotted tail quoll) was once here as was the eastern barred bandicoot who helped our women in digging and tilling the soil to increase the growth of **Murnong**, helping our women to till the soil but now are extinct or rarely seen in this landscape.

Fire and cultural burning in this Country was and continues to be important for renewing growth, food for animals and people. The remnants of farming terraces near Little River are a further reminder that our people were farming and managing this country, well before Europeans and sheep took over our lands.

Now the Victorian Volcanic Grasslands are one of the most threatened ecological communities with less than 5% left as it turned into farming and housing estates.

**You Yangs** National Park, north of Geelong holds strong cultural importance and connections. A place created by **Lowen** one of our creator beings; he flew down from the north. Everywhere a he landed, it turned into granite.

Below the **You Yangs** National Park within the cultural landscape of the volcanic plains is an 11 000 year old stone arrangement that pre-dates the pyramids. These significant sites tell of our old people's knowledge as this country's first scientists and astronomers. We look forward to the day when we can again fulfil our obligations in managing this important cultural place.

There are many Wadawurrung camp sites where our people created permanent water sources, natural rock depressions in the granite that our old people chipped and modified the into rock wells, placing covers on them to keep the water clean and stopping evaporation. Rock artefacts from stone tool making workshops are near to these campsites and the large granite rocks.

Heading west is a continuation of this rock country **Anakie Youang**, meaning 'little hills' that comprise of Coranguilook – the western peak, Baccheriburt – the central peak and Woollerbeen known in our stories as the three sisters, this country holds veins of gold and where the wealth of Victoria has come from. Inland country has Brisbane Ranges National Park, with its gullies and open gum woodlands. The major township of Ballart, plus **Kaveet Bareet** our creation place and **Lal Lal** is our creators final resting place on country.

#### Current Health:



**Goal:** By 2030, the current extent of volcanic grass lands and woodlands is increased by 5%.

#### Indicators:

- Extent of volcanic grasslands
- Age classes of woodlands
- % of grasslands with cultural burning
- % of cultural foods in grasslands

Volcanic grasslands photo Greening Australia

#### Victorian Volcanic Grasslands

Victorian Volcanic Grasslands used to cover much of Wadawurrung Country. The central plains were covered in vast open areas of grasslands with small patches of woodlands.

They are classified as a threatened ecological community.

#### Plants:

- Kangaroo grass
- Wallaby grasses
- Spear grasses
- River gums

#### Animals:

- Yarra Pygmy Perch
- Plains Wanderer
- Striped Legless Lizard







Pt. Addis photo credit Sarah Eccles



## Coastal Country

Our coastal country stretches from the Werribee River, it takes in the Avalon Coastal reserve, **Jilang** (Geelong) - stingaree bayside, the **Bellawiyn** (Bellarine) Peninsula and down along the Barwon, Torquay and Airey's inlet coastline.

Our coastal dunes are layered with living places and hearths from the many generations of our ancestors living, harvesting, sharing meals, trading in these living places and practicing ceremony here. We have the largest stretch of registered cultural sites in Australia along our coastline. Our fish traps, which were used to catch the abundant fish have survived the storms and sea level changes. Ochre pits of different colours are dotted along our sandstone and limestone cliffs and headlands.

Our sandy beaches, rock pools, rocky platforms and reefs were and continue to be places of abundance for harvesting food and resources like crustaceans, shellfish and kelp.

The coastal woodlands and Anglesea heathlands hold stories that teach us of cultural practices like the **moonah** woodlands which are disappearing putting our marriage stories at risk. Our **Wiyn** (grass trees) which we use for fire and spears are badly affected by disease.

The coast holds cultural significance for Wadawurrung People today. With the number of people who call our coast home and come to visit increasing, there is more pressure on the coastal plants, animals and sites.

**Current Health:**



**Goal:** By 2029, native vegetation extent remains or increases and cultural places are protected.

**Indicators:**

- Extent of *moonah*, ironbark and heathlands
- % of cultural sites assessed by Wadawurrung
- Condition of coastal cultural sites
- Increased breeding of shorebirds



Coastal woodland country - photo credit Sarah Eccles





## Warre - Sea Country

We see our **Dja** land and **Warre** sea Country as all one but we have highlighted it here as it needs some real help. Known by many as the surf coast and enjoyed by visitors the world over for its legendary long rolling surf breaks such as Bells Beach where the sea floor contours harness the big swells of the Southern Ocean.

For us it is full of resources, favourite foods and living places along our coast that show how the seas provide so plentifully for generations of Wadawurrung. Fishing, diving, harvesting from the rocky and intertidal reefs.

The estuaries where **Yulluk** (waterways) and **Warre** connect are essential breeding areas, once places of plenty and still so important for ongoing renewal of sea life.

Our sea Country includes Pt. Phillip Head and Pt. Addis Marine National Parks which extend along nine kilometres of our coastline. This area is east of Anglesea to Bells Beach abutting the Great Otway National Park. Barwon Bluff Marine Sanctuary, Pt. Lillias to Pt. Wilson to Kirk Pt, Wedge Point (Port Phillip coast) and Clifton Springs on the Bellarine Peninsula coast include saltmarshes and seagrass beds.

Kelp forests with their giant and bull kelps are homes and food sources for hundreds of sea animals. They are where some of our favourite foods, rock lobster and abalone. These kelp forests provide many resources and can be used to create water carriers.

Huge mammals also use these waters and you can sometimes spot Blue Whales, Southern Right Whales, Killer Whales and seals offshore.

Increased pollution from coastal communities, agricultural and industry run off is changing the sea hydrology and choking our sea life with plastics. Our **Warre** is being overused and heating up with climate changes. We are seeing the loss of our kelp forests and dramatic changes in sealife which we all depend upon.

With so many people sharing and using our coastal and sea Country, Wadawurrung struggle with lack of recognition and equity in access and use of our coastal and sea resources.

**Current Health:**



**Goal:** By 2030, the **warre** (sea) life in species, the seaweed and water quality remains at 2020 numbers and levels.

**Indicators:**

- % of kelp forest and dependent sea life
- % of sea grass with sea grass dependent fish
- % of Wadawurrung people accessing sea resources

***“Our links to coastal and sea Country are vital!  
They continue to be a place where we can swim, fish, harvest and connect,  
a safe place to revive and partake in our living culture.”***

Melinda Kennedy



## Native animals

Native animals are all the animals that are indigenous and belong to Wadawurrung Country.

It includes mammals like echidna and spotted-tailed quoll, birds like **Porronggitj** (brolga), emu, amphibians like frogs, reptiles like snakes, fish and eels. It also includes insects like butterflies, ants and spiders.

There are many animals that used to be found on Wadawurrung Country but aren't any more like dingoes and bilbies. All these animals are important because together with the plants and people they make Country healthy.

Some of these native animals we have strong cultural affiliations with as part of our cultural kinship. They can be totemic species for which we have obligations to protect and look after, like **Connewarre** (black swan).

### Current Health:



**Goal:** By 2030, no more of our native animals have become threatened

**Goal:** By 2035, at least one threatened species is no longer threatened.



**Indicators:**

- Numbers of different types of native animals
- Numbers of threatened species: Striped Legless Lizard, Golden Sun Moth, Growling Grass Frog
- Number of Wadawurrung people who know and are looking after their totemic animals



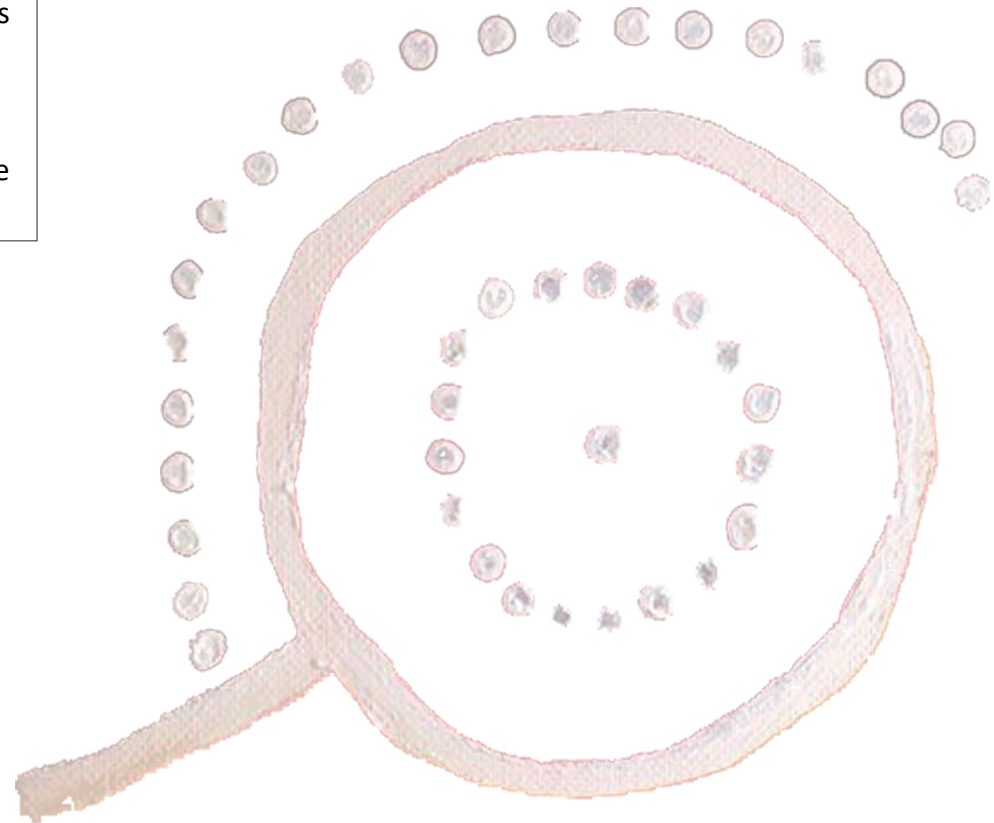
**Waanawal** Tawny Frogmouth - photo credit Sarah Eccles

**Yoorn Spotted-tailed Quoll (*Dasyurus maculatus*)**

The spotted-tailed quoll used to be widespread across Wadawurrung Country but is now nationally listed as endangered.

**Yoorn** is found in the rainforest and wet forests where there are plenty of rock crevices, tree hollows and caves for den sites. They are solitary and hunt at night for mammals such as possums, birds and reptiles.


In our coastal country, the north areas of the Otway National Park and the Anglesea Heathlands is one of the few places we still find **Yoorn**.

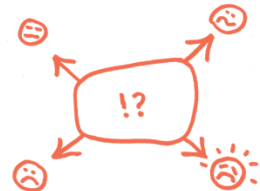



## Threats - the problems that make our values unhealthy

There are many threats that stop our values from being healthy but some are worse than others. We want to work on the worst threats first. We ranked them by looking at the amount of damage they cause across our values, how badly they hurt our values and how easy the damage is to fix.

We used the following to decide the ranking for each threat against the relevant value thinking about how bad and the area of damage that would be reasonably expected within 10 years under current circumstances:

Amount of Damage (Scope)	
	<b>VH</b> Very widespread —everywhere the value is
	<b>H</b> Widespread
	<b>M</b> More local
	<b>L</b> Very local

Is it Fixable (Irreversibility)	
	<b>VH</b> Not fixable, for all intents and purposes
	<b>H</b> Fixable but really expensive
	<b>M</b> Fixable with reasonable commitment of resources
	<b>L</b> Easily fixable at relatively low cost

How bad (Severity)	
	<b>VH</b> Destroy or eliminate
	<b>H</b> Seriously degrade
	<b>M</b> Moderately degrade
	<b>L</b> Slightly impair





This table shows how we ranked each threat against the targets they affect to come out with an overall rank in the right-hand column

Threats \ Targets	Wadawurrung cultural sites and places	Sea Country	Inland Country	Rivers, estuaries and wetlands	Wadawurrung culture and people	Native animals	Bushtucker, medicines and resources	Enterprise and Employment	Coastal Country	Summary Threat Rating
Urban development	High	High	High	High	Very High	High	High		High	Very High
Lack of coordination	High	High	High	High	High	High	High			Very High
Lack of recognition	Very High				Very High					Very High
Sea level rise	High	High		Medium			High		High	Very High
Water extraction	High	High		Medium			High		High	Very High
Lack of capacity	High	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	High	Medium	High
Rising sea temperatures		Very High							Medium	High
Inappropriate location of wind farms	High				High	Low				High
Inappropriate visitation	High	High				Medium			Medium	High
Vandalism	Very High								Low	High
Cinnamon fungus			High				High		Medium	High
Weeds		High	High	High			High		High	High
Rabbits	High	High	High	Medium			High			High
Foxes and cats				High		High	Medium			High
Bushfires	High		High	Medium	Medium	Medium	Medium		Medium	High
Drought	High	Medium	Medium	Medium	High	Medium	High		Medium	High

## Threat descriptions

These are the threats we will work on first as they affect our values the most and by dealing with these threats, we have the best chance of making our values healthier.



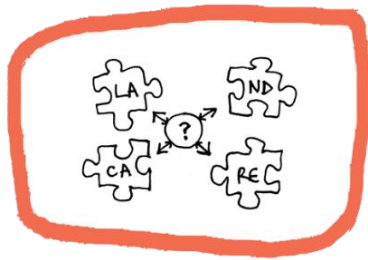
### Urban development

Much of our Country has been substantially modified by urban development, particularly in those areas centred on Geelong and Ballarat. Our country is experiencing the largest urban growth corridor in Victoria.

The G21 Regional Growth Plan predicts that the population of this region will increase from its current 294,000 people to 433,000 by 2041.

The Central Highlands Regional Growth Plan predicts that the population of the Central Highlands region will increase from its current 169,300 people to 247,500 by 2041.

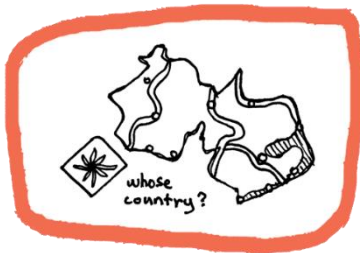
As the population grows there will be greater pressure to develop more land for housing, commercial and industrial purposes.



### **Lack of coordination between land managers**

Many different organisations are responsible for managing land in our Country. These include local government, state government departments, non-government organisations, private landholders and community-based groups such as Landcare. This means we must engage with a range of organisations with different goals and governance structures.

The way the land is managed at the moment is not working well and we want it to be looked after in a coordinated and holistic way.

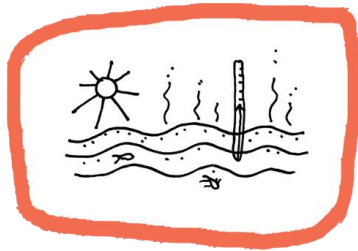


### **Lack of recognition**

Many land managers do not recognise Wadawurrung people as the Traditional Owners and custodians of Wadawurrung Country. We are often excluded from decisions making processes regarding what happens on Country. There is lack of education around the Aboriginal cultural heritage act and our role as the legally recognized corporation to work with in protecting cultural heritage.

This is disempowering and not best for Country. By recognising us as the traditional owners and working with us to take care of Country we will all benefit. We will continue to seek formal recognition through all means available.



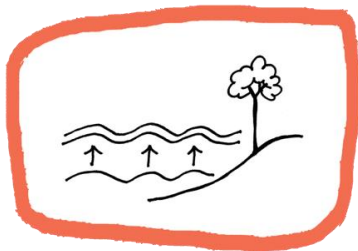


### Rising sea temperatures

Sea surface temperature is projected to increase in the range of 1.6 to 3.4 °C by 2090 under high carbon emissions.

This poses a significant threat to the marine environment through biological changes in marine species, including local abundance, community structure and enhanced coral bleaching risk.

The sea will also become more acidic proportional to emissions growth.

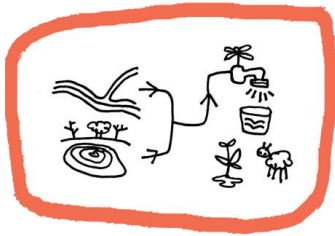


### Sea level rise

Sea level rises due to climate change will lead to inundation of coastal areas and loss of cultural sites.

By 2030 the projected range of sea-level rise for the region's coastline is 0.08 to 0.18 m above the 1986 – 2005 level, with only minor differences between emission scenarios.

Under certain circumstances, sea level rises higher than these may occur.



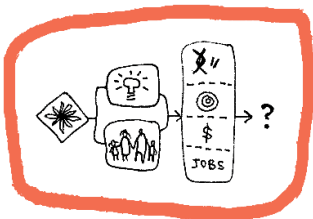
## Yulluk (Water) extraction

The upper Barwon/Moorabool, Yarowee and Leigh rivers or Barre Warre Yulluk catchment (including 94 tributaries) covers 5,380 km<sup>2</sup>.

These rivers provide the majority of the drinking water for Geelong and Ballarat. Water is extracted from rivers and underground aquifers to supply town water, farming and industry. To hold water in sections for use there are many weirs and barriers placed into our waterways.

This results in less water going into our rivers, wetlands and estuaries, affecting the waterflows and availability.

This harms our plants, animals, their homes, the nurseries for species such as wetland birds, fish and shellfish. This also affects their ability to feed, breed and impacts our cultural values and stories.



## Lack of capacity

It is our cultural obligation to look after Wadawurrung Dja but there are only a few people who have jobs taking care of Country.

To be able to work with the many land managers on Wadawurrung Country we need support for more Wadawurrung people to build the wide range of skills needed. To be able to combine both current natural resource management techniques with traditional knowledge and practices.

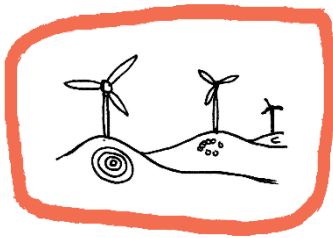


### **Inappropriate visitation**

While we welcome visitors to our Country we want them to be respectful, be careful and educated about the impact they have.

Using 4WDs, vehicles, bikes and motorbikes or by walking in sensitive areas can cause the loss of native plants, damage to cultural sites and erosion. Walking dogs on beaches and other places can disturb wildlife especially breeding shorebirds. Some places are sacred and should only be visited by certain people.

We have people camping authorized in areas that are not designated camp areas that cause impacts to Country.



### **Inappropriate location of windfarms**

We encourage and value green technology that limits harm to Country however windfarms have often been constructed in the wrong place, destroying cultural sites or cutting through (intangible heritage) song lines and story lines. We are also concerned about their impact on birds such as wedge-tailed eagles.

This can be prevented through consultation with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in the early stages of wind farm proposal development.





## Vandalism

Most people enjoy and respect the places they visit but there are some people who deliberately deface, damage or destroy signs and cultural sites. It is disappointing to see rubbish and graffiti around our cultural sites and places.

We feel this disrespect of our special places deeply.



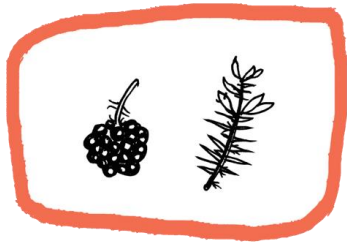
## Cinnamon fungus

Cinnamon fungus (*Phytophthora cinnamomi*) is an introduced root-rot fungus that causes dieback of native plants.

Our **Wiyu** (fire) trees, the grass trees and other native plants are being killed by this fungus. It is spread through the transport of infected soil on tyres and shoes. Whilst there are measures to limit the spread of the fungus, such as staying on established tracks, wash down stations to clean shoes and wheels. As there is no known treatment to remove or destroy the fungus once an area is infected.



Cinnamon Fungus – before and after



## Weeds

Many types of plants found on Country are non-indigenous species that have come from other places. Some do very well and become weeds spreading rapidly, causing harm and stopping our native plants from thriving.

This can also include the many plantations like pine plantations in our inland country.

Once these weeds start to grow, they can be spread by wind, water, by attachment to animals, humans and machinery, inclusion in mud, soil, fodder and mulch, ingestion as a food source or intentionally by humans.



Weeds



## Bushfires

Our Wadawurrung ancestors managed **Dja** (Country) with **wiyu** (fire). Ongoing traditional fire burning management can reduce the destruction of hot and rapid bushfires.

Sophisticated knowledge developed over millennia of when and where to burn shows that fire was an essential tool for land management.

This practice provided an increase of not only food and medicine plants to harvest but increased the biodiversity on healthy **Dja**. Today, we are bringing back cultural burning practices and putting Wadawurrung people back onto **Dja**.

When we take fire out of the landscape over time, we see thicker forested areas and dry sclerophyll matter build up over time. This creates higher intensity bushfires and very little stands a chance to survive. Wadawurrung want to reduce that risk, keep our people safe and eliminate the damage to culturally significant places, native plants and animals.

Bushfires endanger lives and destroy property. With climate change, harsher weather patterns and longer fire seasons prevail. The need for the return of managing **Dja** with fire is intrinsic.

*'Wayn gurr dja - 'good Country  
Willem wiyu canboo - a fire was there once  
Wayn gurr karrung - It was a good place to camp  
Maiwan - a long time ago  
kimbarne wiyu murrup - here fire spirit  
yangarramela' - come back'  
Tammy Gilson – Wadawurrung*





## Drought

More frequent and more severe droughts due to climate change will result in less water in waterways and wetlands and therefore less water for plants and animals.

More water will be taken out of waterways and groundwater for use by the community, agriculture and other industries

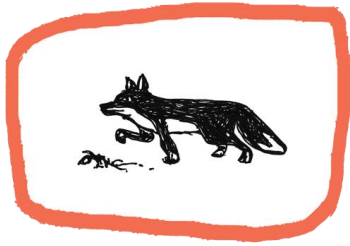


## Rabbits

Rabbits are considered the Corangamite region's worst introduced grazer.

A single pair of rabbits can produce 30-40 young a year. Rabbits establish warrens where suitable soil conditions allow and quickly establish breeding populations. They cause loss of plant cover and soil erosion through eating native plants and digging burrows.

They can stop native plants from growing back after a fire because they eat all the seedlings.



## Foxes and cats

Foxes and cats are pest predators that kill our native mammals like **boo** (bandicoot), spotted-tailed **Yoorn** (quoll), birds like orange-bellied parrot and reptiles.

Foxes and cats have contributed to some native species becoming extinct on Wadawurrung Country.

**There are many other threats, including the following:**

- Goats
- Deer
- Poor management of fisheries
- Herbicides and pesticides
- Stormwater runoff
- Treated effluent disposal
- Mining
- Weirs and reservoirs
- Lack of resources
- Waste Dumping
- Horse riding estates
- Wrong way fire
- Recreational fishing
- Boating churning up water
- Ballast water
- Wrong disposal of whale carcasses
- Grazing



Yaluk Wiyn Burt - Welcome and Water Ceremony- photo credit Sarah Eccles



## Programs and Strategies

These are the projects we have decided to focus on our priorities that we can do with our partners to reduce the worst threats and improve the health of our values, to heal Country and strengthen Wadawurrung people.

### *Gobata bengadak tjarra* (Us supporting Us – Cultural Strengthening)

- Culture and Language Strengthening Program
- Keeping Place – A safe place for our cultural resources, for Wadawurrung to come together on country and practice culture
- Cultural Centre; For Sharing, Education and Enterprise
- Wadawurrung cultural education and language
- Elders Support Services

### *Wurrgurwilwa Wadawurrung Corporation* (Strengthening Wadawurrung Corporation)

- Employment and mentoring
- Enterprise development and support
- Recognition and Respect for Wadawurrung People, Treaty
- Engagement with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) Members
- Structural reform of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)
- Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

### *Gobata Dja baap Ngubiyt* (Taking Care of Country and Waters)

- Caring for Country Team
- Cultural Values Management
- *Dja* and *Yulluk* - Country and Water Acquisition & Management
- Co-management
- Cultural Burning
- Representation on Planning Committees
- Cultural Heritage Management (Physical artefacts)





Wadawurrung welcome to country at women's AFL at Geelong football club:  
Photo credit Sarah Eccles



## Gobata bengadak tjarra

(Us supporting Us – Cultural Strengthening)

### **Culture and Language Strengthening Program**

We are already providing some opportunities for Wadawurrung families to learn language and culture. We will provide dedicated ongoing opportunities year-round so that all Wadawurrung People can be on Country to share and learn and strengthen our cultural identity and family connections. Healing and building our Wadawurrung nation so we can continue to care for Country and share our rich culture with the broader public.

To provide connection to cultural knowledge and better understanding of Country in residents, visitors and lands managers. We will provide a safe place for our young people to learn and practice culture, so they can stand strong, proud and lead with this cultural knowledge.

#### **Goals:**

- By 2021 we have established an ongoing cultural strengthening program for Wadawurrung people.
- By 2030 our younger generations are leading cultural practices.

## **Keeping Place – A safe place for our cultural resources, for Wadawurrung to practice culture**

We will have a keeping place, a place that is for Wadawurrung to use and come together. A place to keep our cultural resources safe, where we can gather to share and be on Country.

### **Goals:**

- By 2029, Wadawurrung people have a keeping place that is a safe space for practicing and passing on culture where our cultural artefacts and resources are housed and protected.

## **Cultural Centre – For Sharing, Education and Enterprise**

We are negotiating the use and development of cultural centres where visitors can come to learn and celebrate our people, our rich culture and Country. Visitors will be able to buy our cultural arts and crafts and take tours. We are incorporating our culture into existing centres, tourism experiences, school camp programs and housing developments and new precincts. Examples of partnerships that share our culture are; the Great Ocean Road Chocolaterie - Corroboree garden program and coastal bushtucker range, the discovery trail at Harpley Estate near Werribee and the Sovereign Hill hidden histories and education program at Ballarat. We will increase our partnerships to expand these opportunities for sharing our culture.

### **Goals:**

- By 2028 Wadawurrung people have a cultural learning centre for visitors and local people.
- By 2023 Wadawurrung have established two additional partnerships for incorporating cultural experiences into existing education or information centres.
- By 2027, 50% of Wadawurrung language names for places are back on Country

## Wadawurrung cultural education and language program

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) have a cultural education program that shares our cultural and language with the public, particularly within schools. We will build on our existing program and develop a calendar of events so that groups can select the program, location and time that suits their needs.

We are developing a language program that can be incorporated into schools as the basis of introducing Wadawurrung culture. We have cultural and language resources such as the Wadawurrung language app and dictionary to support our people and the public to learn Wadawurrung language. We are working with local councils and developers in renaming places to language names to raise awareness. For example, outside of Geelong in the Bellarine Peninsula, the Armstrong Creek area is being renamed **Dooliebeel** which reflects our language for river red gums and grasslands.

### Goals:

- By 2025, 5% of schools on Wadawurrung Country have the language and culture program in their curriculum.
- By 2022, our Wadawurrung language app will be accessible for all mobile phones.
- By 2021 our calendar of events for cultural education and language will be available.

*"When you use place names and you understand the meaning of the names it educates, connects and strengthens our culture."*

Bryon Powell - Wadawurrung Elder



## **Elders Support Services**

Our Elders have enabled us to survive and began building the foundations for us to thrive and to have our cultural knowledge and practices. They began the important fight for recognition of Wadawurrung people, developing our representative organisation, standing strong for our identity. It is our responsibility to continue their dream of having people understand who we are, to share our culture. To once again have access to our Country as our economic base to take our rightful place as a politically and culturally empowered first nations people.

With our Elders, it is our priority to provide to support for their wholistic care. They need ongoing support to look after their health, their homes, their cultural and community connections and all-round well-being. At times they have accessed services that have not provided for their needs and it is in honouring their request we have a Wadawurrung Elders support officer who provides tailored support for Elders. Giving the Elders time together socially, providing cultural activities, health and domestic supports.

Support to attend gatherings, meetings and continue to give vital input into the Wadawurrung corporation to guide our cultural business.

We want to continue this role and build on these services to be run as an ongoing program, to meet their individual, cultural, family and financial needs so they can enjoy the benefits of their hard work and struggle for recognition. To respect, capture and share their cultural knowledge and stories.

### **Goals:**

- By 2022 we will have developed an ongoing Elders support program.
- By 2023 the Elders cultural knowledge and stories will be captured for their families to share.

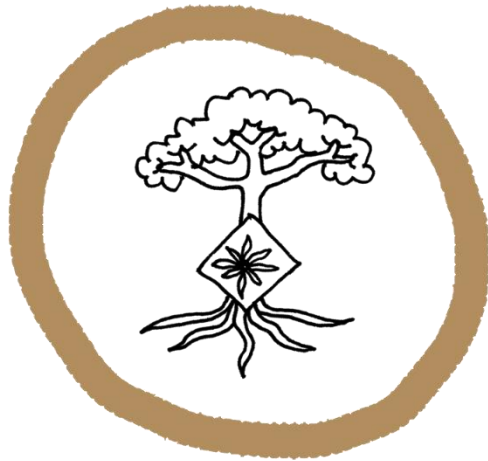


Joyce Eccles, Wadawurrung Elder and 5 generations of Wadawurrung on country  
Photo credit: Fern Milne





Uncle Bryon sharing knowledge - *You Yangs*  
Photo credit Al Dermer



## Wurrgurwilwa Wadawurrung Corporation

(Strengthening Wadawurrung Corporation)

### Employment and mentoring

We will increase the capacity of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) by increasing the number of staff employed to deliver this plan. Staff will be supported to do their jobs well through training and mentoring.

#### Goals:

- By 2025, WTOAC will have doubled the number of staff and budget to deliver the programs in this Country plan.



## **Enterprise development and support**

We will create sustainable businesses and employment through many of the projects within these program areas, including through the Land and Sea Management Program. We will expand other cultural services the Corporation already provides and increase our arts, cultural tourism businesses and business partnerships.

We will take an innovative approach in adapting cultural knowledge and services to address threats that are making our Country sick in a way that provides work on Country, examples of this are seaweed farming and native grasses production.

We will support our members to develop businesses outside the corporation that compliments and increases Wadawurrung people's ability to be employed in looking after culture and Country. We will expand on programs where Wadawurrung are already actively involved such as tourism experiences and cultural tours.

### **Goals:**

- By 2024 the Caring for Country Team will be generating 20% of WTOAC's income, employment and training opportunities.
- By 2027 Wadawurrung aquaculture, cultural services and tourism, wind farms and seaweed farming are generating income and employment for our people.

## Recognition and Respect for Wadawurrung People, Treaty

We will use the Country plan to progress our Native Title, Traditional Owner Settlement Act and Treaty negotiations to give us the legal security and recognition of our connections and cultural responsibilities to care for Country. In this way decisions about Country will be made by Traditional Owners and not the broader Aboriginal community who live on our Country. We will have worked with our partners and stakeholders to develop information that reaffirms our legal role as the Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) in looking after cultural heritage and providing cultural education and services. This will help stakeholders to clarify who to contact and be clear on their legal responsibilities and accountability.

We will develop signs to acknowledge people are coming into our Country, to help them understand our culture and how to care for Country. We believe that once people have greater understanding of culture and Country, respect and recognition will follow.

WTOAC will improve its branding and media presence through our own and partners websites and social media. As well as through development of branded products that educate and develop awareness.

### Goals:

- By 2023, the Wadawurrung brand is known, respected and trusted.
- By 2023, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners will have achieved more formal legal recognition for our Country.
- By 2025, 30% of national parks, councils and tourism experiences have acknowledgement and story signages.
- By 2029, 70% of people who are living on Wadawurrung Country know that it is Wadawurrung Country and who we are.

*"We are an oral culture, we need someone to yarn to us about what is happening."*

Mary Shuttleworth - Wadawurrung

## **Engagement with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) Members**

WTOAC will be known by all Wadawurrung People. They will see the value of the Corporation, understand that it represents them and will want to be actively involved. WTOAC will achieve this by having a strong governance structure, supportive systems, policies and tools that blend cultural and legislative requirements to increase communication and engagement of its members and stakeholders.

### **Goals:**

- By 2021 WTOAC has increased its communications to all members through a community engagement worker and various forms of media.
- By 2026 WTOAC has increased its membership base by 30% across all family lines.

## **Structural Reform of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)**

We will grow WTOAC so there are enough appropriate people with the right knowledge to support Wadawurrung people and care for Country. This will include developing the Healthy Country and Culture Committee to make sure that all WTOAC activities are based on cultural knowledge.

### **Goals:**

- By 2021 the WTOAC Healthy Country and Culture Committee is guiding projects.
- By 2022 WTOAC has strong governance, an effective corporate structure, policies and tools in place to provide the skills and workforce required to look after our Country and People.
- By 2027, WTOAC is the employer of choice for Wadawurrung people.

## Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

We are already working closely with land, water and natural resource managers at all levels of government, with environment and friends' groups.

We, as Wadawurrung People, are valued and recognised as Traditional Owners and are involved in making decisions that affect our People and Country.

With so many land and water authorities, environmental and user groups we want to support better coordination across stakeholders engaging and working with us. This will limit our capacity being overstretched, it will support a more interconnected, cultural landscape perspective to managing country.

We will continue to work with our neighbouring Traditional Owners groups, as our ancestors have for thousands of generations.

### Goals:

- By 2027 WTOAC is known and being engaged by 60% of our stakeholders in any decisions to do with cultural and environmental management in our Country.
- By 2030, we have healthy relationships and partnerships supported by agreements with 60% of our priority stakeholders.

***"Keep connecting, coming together, this will keep us strong"***

Melinda Kennedy





### ***Djirnap* our fire carrier**

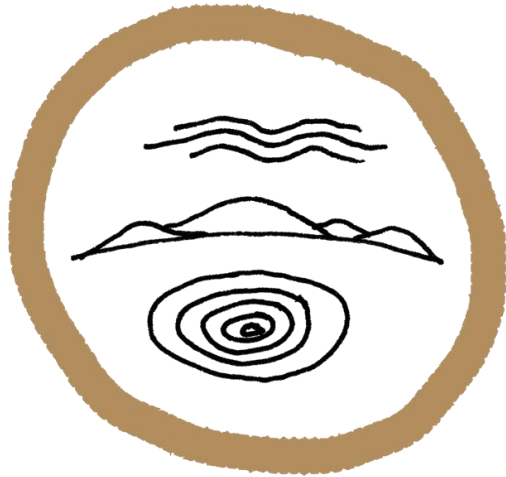
***Djirnap*** the cockatoo was our fire carrier, carrying the fire on the top of his head. He would not share his fire, he kept it to himself. ***Waa*** (Crow) and pigeon were the first to try and steal the fire, but they could not. Along came the sparrow hawk. He befriended the ***Djirnap***, they shared some tucker at camp.

After a big feed, later that night ***Djirnap*** fell asleep beside the fire. Sparrow hawk took the fire and shared it amongst the people.

***Djirnap*** still wears his yellow firecrest and underneath his crest lies a bald patch where the fire once burnt him.

Tammy Gilson,  
Wadawurrung Traditional  
Owner (from ***Wiyu-Murrup***  
***Yangarramela*** - Fire spirit  
comes back)

***wiyu*** - photo credit Corangamite CMA



## Gobata Dja baap Ngubiyt

(Taking care of Country and waters)

### Caring for Country team

We are establishing our own a Caring for Country Team under the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC). The team will consist of existing and new positions. Their role will be to coordinate and deliver our Country Plan.

#### Goals:

- By 2021, our Caring for Country Team is established.
- By 2028 Wadawurrung priority diseases, pest weeds and animals are reduced in our important cultural places and landscapes.
- By 2024 our caring for country team is contracted to manage priority diseases, pest weeds and animals across our cultural landscapes.

## Cultural Values Management

We have a Cultural Heritage Team that actively manage our cultural values and which will be expanded and strengthened. They work with our partners on agreements and plans with support from our Healthy Country and Culture Committee. Initially we will focus developing these agreements within the Bellarine Peninsula, and our coastal and sea country.

Our Cultural Heritage Team, will work closely with land and managers, including councils to help them understand our important cultural heritage and places across country will be assessed and map by Wadawurrung so we know their threats and protection needs.

The cultural values of our coastal country are disappearing so fast as sea rise and their and our responsibilities in managing cultural heritage.

### Goals:

- By 2024, cultural heritage values along our coastal country are assessed.
- By 2027, Cultural Heritage Plans or Agreements are in place to guide the protection of priority cultural places.



Point Impossible spear sharpening and midden site, photo Sarah Eccles





Barwon meeting the sea  
Artwork by Nikki McKenzie



## Dja and Yulluk (Country and water) Acquisition and Management

In current legal frameworks, across the 1 million hectares of Wadawurrung Country we own and manage 54 hectares (Bostock Reservoir). We will use Bostock Reservoir to build our skills in contemporary land management to compliment and strengthen our traditional management practices and address the new management problems we face today.

Without access to Country and water we are limited in our role and ability to care for Country. We will continue to work towards acquiring important and culturally significant places on freehold like the property that includes the sacred site stone arrangement at Mount Rothwell, near Little River.

Building upon our relationships and partnerships with landholders and management authorities will give us additional opportunities for access and input into looking after Country. The Barwon and Moorabool Rivers and tributaries are important water resources for us and are highly impacted so we will focus our water management activities here initially.

### Goals:

- By 2025 WTOAC have acquired 3% or 30 000 ha of our Country and it is managed for the benefit of our community.
- By 2029 WTOAC are working with private landholders across 40 000 ha of freehold land in access and management arrangements.
- By 2030, the water in the waterways of *the Barre Warre Yulluk* is clean enough to drink.
- By 2025, the waterways of the *Barre Warre Yulluk* will have sufficient cultural flows and connectivity to support culturally important species.
- By 2025, we will have negotiated access to water rights as an economic base for Wadawurrung.

## Co-management

Co-management can provide us with enterprise opportunities, jobs and access to more of our important cultural sites and places so we can take care of them. We will start to negotiate co-management arrangements for the **You Yangs** Regional Park and coastal crown land, as they contain many culturally significant sites. We would like co-management to be a pathway to full management by Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) for some areas identified by Wadawurrung.

### Goals:

- By 2025 **You Yangs** Regional Park and the extended western grasslands are co-managed.
- By 2029 20,000 ha (10%) of crown land that are special places to us are in Wadawurrung management.

## Wiyu murrup goopma dja – (bringing fire spirit to Country)

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners are bringing cultural burning practices back to **Dja** to renew our Country, reaffirm our cultural connections, our identity and heal Country and people. Cultural burning practices build both a resilient ecosystem and culturally connected landscape. We will work alongside some of our neighbouring Traditional Owners and in partnership with other land management authorities, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Parks Victoria, Fire Rescue Victoria (FRV) and Country Fire Authority (CFA) work to learn, share and build knowledge.

These collaborations focus on incorporating cultural burning into regulatory frameworks, planning and practice.

Working together we are implementing old cultural knowledge and understanding as a way to support cultural burning practices that meet cultural and ecological objectives to reduce the risk of damaging bushfires. In 2017, The **Wiyu-Murrup Yangarramela** (Fire spirit comes back) project was an example of a collaborative approach of working in partnership with key stakeholders to showcase how Wadawurrung people used fire on grassland **Dja**.

To continue a Wadawurrung-led cultural burning program we are building our capacity by practicing and learning on Country, training in fire management skills and acquiring equipment to build up our **Wiyu murrup goopma dja** management team. We will be able to contract out our services across all tenures, towards making Country healthy and upholding our cultural responsibilities to care for it in a way that provides jobs. Initially we will focus our attention on cultural burns in You Yangs Regional Park and surrounding grasslands, Point Addis National Park, Brisbane Ranges National Park and Steiglitz Historic Park.

### Goals:

- By 2023 our **Wiyu murrup goopma dja** management team is established with the capacity to lead and be contracted for public and private land burns.
- By 2025 cultural burning practices are integrated into all levels of burn plans and 50 % of burns are led by Wadawurrung Traditional Owners with DELWP, Parks Victoria and CFA collaboration.

## Representation on Planning Committees

Wadawurrung People are respected and valued as the Traditional Owners of Wadawurrung Country and have decision-making powers through representation on key planning committees. We will focus on Committees that represent a number of land and water managers in the Geelong and Ballarat areas where urban development pressures are increasing.

### Goals:

- By 2022 key planning committees and plans have incorporated Wadawurrung management concerns and this is informing decisions.
- By 2030 Wadawurrung People's principles of sustainability are incorporated into housing estates such as emission reduction targets, water minimisation and green energy are mandatory in housing developments.



*"Our voice and knowledge is vital at the highest level if our Country is to be protected."*



A sunset over the ocean with a bird silhouette flying in front of the sun.

Koling wada-ngal

Let's walk together

Nyatne

Thanks

## Appendix 1: Learning as we go (monitoring, reporting and improvement)

We will use signposts (indicators) to check if what we are doing is working.  
We will know that our strategies are working if the threats are reducing and the health of our values are improving.  
If it is not working as we expected we will review our strategies and actions and adapt them until we find what works.

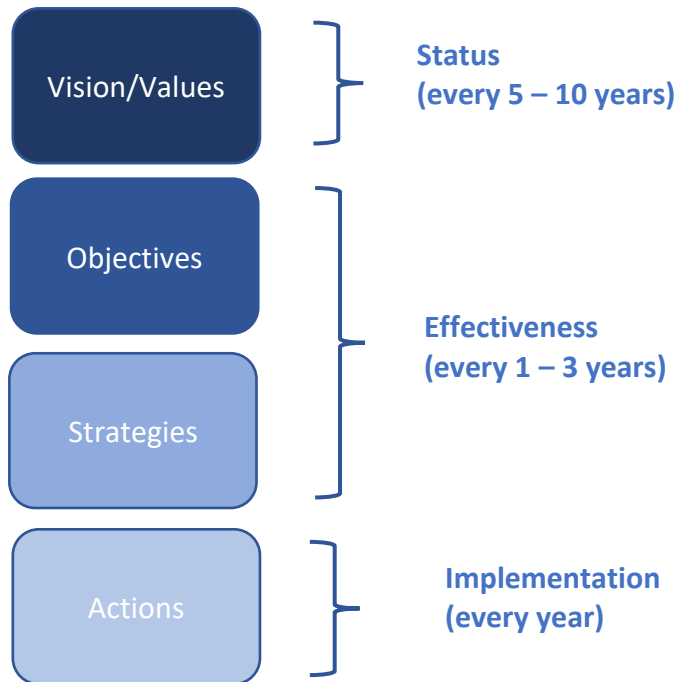


Figure 2: The link between monitoring and the plan



Figure 3: The different levels of reporting

## Appendix 2: References

Corangamite Catchment Authority Corangamite Natural Resource Management Plan for Climate Change, Corangamite Catchment Authority

Corangamite Catchment Authority Corangamite Regional Catchment Strategy 2013-2019

Corangamite Catchment Authority Corangamite Invasive Plant and Animal Management Strategy 2010

Corangamite Catchment Authority Corangamite Waterway Strategy 2014 – 2022

Corangamite Catchment Authority Corangamite Marine and Coastal Biodiversity Strategy 2009

Corangamite Catchment Authority (2005) Corangamite Native Vegetation Plan 2003 – 2008

The Wadawurrung People – Did you know?

Wadawurrung Traditional Fishing Methods poster

Wadawurrung Country of the Victorian Volcanic Plains (2019)

*Wiyu-Murrup Yangarramela* – Fire Spirit Comes Back





**Wadawurrung**  
Traditional Owners  
Aboriginal Corporation

