



NGALDURRONG YANA | WALK TOGETHER

# Annual Report

2022 – 2023





Published by the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, trading as DJAARA (ICN: 4421)  
13-15 Forest Street, Bendigo 3550, Victoria Australia  
info@djadjawurrung.com.au | www.djadjawurrung.com.au

Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this document may contain images or names of People who have since passed away.

© Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation  
November 2023

Cover: Stuart Walmsley, 2023, DJAARA garni (digging stick) ceremony  
Design: hellostoryland.com

#### Copyright

All Indigenous knowledge in this Report remains the intellectual property of the Dja Dja Wurrung People. Protocols exist 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.

This Report remains the copyright of Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, trading as DJAARA, and may not be copied or used in part or whole without prior agreement of DDWCAC.



**I'd like the rest of the world to know that Dja Dja Wurrung still exist. We are still here as a People. We are proud and value our Culture.**

**We honour our Martinga guli (Ancestors), and everything that we do, we are doing on behalf of our Martinga guli, who didn't have the voice that we have today.**

Aunty Fay Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta Elder





# Contents

6	Djali		
7	Our Important Words		
	<b>DJAARA</b>		
9	Our Story		
10	Our Corporation		
12	Our Vision		
13	Our Aspirations		
14	Our Leadership		
	A message from the Chair		
16	Our Board of Directors		
20	A message from our CEO		
22	A message from our DJAARA General Manager		
	<b>FEATURE STORIES</b>		
24	A Digging Stick Ceremony for our new Dja Dja Wurrung Centre		
26	DJAARA signs a unique partnership agreement with Greater Bendigo		
30	Welcoming Babies to Country		
32	Malamiya Mang Arts Festival		
34	Our Newest Enterprise — DJAKITJ		
36	Expanding our Cultural Burning Program to Care for Country		
40	Bendigo Law Courts Opens		
	<b>BALAKI WURREKANG</b>		
42	Balaki Wurrekang   Community Engagement		
	<b>Balaki Wurrekang Events</b>		
44	Easter Family Day		
45	Charlton Cup Race Day		
46	Supporting our Members		
46	Dja Dja Wurrung Elder shares children's stories in new book		
48	Talking Treaty		
50	Bayikina Dja Dja Wurrung Language		
	<b>MALAMIYA</b>		
54	Malamiya   Cultural Heritage		
61	DJAARA assists with flood clean-up on Country		
62	Dja Dja Wurrung in the spotlight		
	<b>DJA DJA WURREKATJALANGU</b>		
64	Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu   Recognition and Settlement		
	<b>PARTNERSHIPS AND POLICY</b>		
68	Partnerships and Policy		
70	Our Forest Gardening Strategy to heal Country		
72	Wombat Forest Recovery Works		
75	Djandak Wi   Country fire		
76	Djaara Women's Inspiring Journey on the Japan Knowledge Exchange Tour		
78	DJAARA leading the way on climate change		
80	Nyauwi Mutjeka, Our Renewable Energy Strategy launched!		
84	Dhelkunya Dja Policy		
86	DJAARA signposts a new way of Caring for Country		
89	Galkangu   Joint Management		
90	Work to begin on visitor hub upgrade at Guyura (Kooyoora State Park)		
	<b>DHELKUNYA DJA</b>		
92	Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board		
	<b>THE CORPORATION</b>		
94	Corporate & Business Services		
96	Human Resources		
99	Financial Report Extract		
	<b>DJA DJA WURRUNG ENTERPRISES</b>		
102	A message from our General Manager Economic Development		
104	Business Capabilities		
106	DJANDAK   Pioneering sustainable economic growth with cultural integrity		
108	DJANDAK   Design Team: Djaara cultural expression in Public Space		
111	Gatjin   Water		
114	Djaara Water Strategy calls for change		
116	DJANDAK   Ecology and biodiversity		
118	DJANDAK   Land management		
120	DJANDAK   Forestry & Fire Program		
121	DJANDAK   Natural Resource Management Works and Construction Crew		
123	DUMAWUL		



# Djali (Dja Dja Wurrung Language)

Our language is important to us in so many ways.

It keeps us connected to our People, our Country, our community, and our Culture. Djali (Dja Dja Wurrung language) is our foundation. We speak it today, more than ever, as it reawakens. Djali is present in the stories that follow. We share it to instil it across Country through the land, rivers, trees, and People.

DJALI	MEANING
Balaki Wuka	Giving to community
Balaki Wurrekang	Mob talking to mob. DJAARA also use it to refer to our Community Engagement.
bayikina	reawakening
Dhelkunya Dja	Healing/make good, land/ Country
Dhelkunyangu Gatjin	working together to heal water
Dit-dit Djina	hard-hooved animal
Dja Dja Wurrung	Yes, Yes speaking/lip
Dja or djaa	Country
Djaa Walatjalang	love of place
Djaara	The People of Dja Dja Wurrung Country
Djandak	Country, Dja Dja Wurrung Country
Djandak Wi or Wii	Country Fire
Djuwima Djandaki	To show and to share our Country
Galkangu	Build together, we make together, make things happen together, more connected to Country.  DJAARA also use it to refer to Joint Management.
Gapa Giya	'to know, to think / to ask, to tell'

gatjin	water
Larni Yirrip	home or place of ironbark tree
Liyanganyuk Banyul	Mount Alexander
Malamiya	Long ago, Dreamtime, before this time.  DJAARA also use it to refer to Dja Dja Wurrung Cultural Heritage.
Malamiya Mang	Malamiya - long time ago, dreamtime. Mang - now.  Malamiya Mang remembers the old, THEN and empower the new, NOW.
Martinga guli	Ancestors, Dja Dja Wurrung Ancestors
Murrup	Spirit
Ngaldurrong yana	Walk together (together walk)
Nyauwi	Sun
Nyauwi Mutjeka	to keep the sun
Wanyarra Dum	Frog Ponds
Wanyarrum Dhelk	Healthy Water
Wartaka	Come together with purpose.  DJAARA also uses it to refer to Djaara Members' focus groups.

# Our Important Words

As we find ways to embed Dja Dja Wurrung language across all that we do, we also ensure that the words that are important to us are highlighted to strengthen their use.

The following words hold cultural significance and importance to Dja Dja Wurrung and First Nations Peoples.

The importance of Aboriginal, Ancestor, Country, Culture, Elders, People, Cultural Heritage, Caring for Country, First Nations, and Traditional Owners are capitalised to signify their importance.

Aunty/Uncle is used as a sign of respect regarding the person that is mentioned.

Djaara-fy/fyd/ing is an action word. It is the action of painting things with a Dja Dja Wurrung brush through perspective, knowledge, language, and presence, doing things the Djaara way.

Dja Dja Wurrung frequently appears throughout this document and is interchangeable with Djaara.

Dja Dja Wurrung language is used with the English interpretation after it the first time the word appears. Then the word appears in language throughout the document.

Corporation frequently appears throughout this document and is interchangeable with DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation).

Enterprise/s frequently appears throughout this document and is interchangeable with Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Pty Ltd, trading as DJANDAK, DUMAWUL and DJAKITJ.

Our, us, we throughout this document is an interchangeable term used at times to describe Dja Dja Wurrung People or the Dja Dja Wurrung Group.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Group is made up of DJAARA and its subsidiary companies Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Pty Ltd., trading as DJANDAK, DUMAWUL & DJAKITJ.

We capitalise all of our Corporate entities to align with our DJAARA branding i.e., DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation), and all the Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises trading as DJANDAK, DUMAWUL & DJAKITJ throughout this document.



## Our Story

Dja Dja Wurrung People have lived on our Traditional lands and cared for our Country over many thousands of years.

For us, Country is more than just the landscape, it is more than what is visible to the eye - it is a living entity, which holds the stories of creation and histories that cannot be erased.

Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) feel an affinity with the land when we are on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country). There is an inner peace that runs through us, a feeling of recognition and belonging. We maintain this strong physical relationship with Djandak by continuing to access it, looking after it and finding ways to heal it.

But over the years, our lands have been exploited and misused, and our People driven off the land and away from Djandak. Unsustainable development changed fire regimes and mining have changed the nature of Djandak and caused it harm. We have a duty to care for our Country and feel ashamed and sad that it is currently suffering. When the Country suffers, we suffer.

More than 200 years ago, our Ancestors were the experts who managed this land. They were the first conservationists who respected the environment and had the right land management in place. They knew of our Country's plants and animals, cycles, and systems. They understood the role that fire plays in regeneration and in promoting the balance of species and ecosystems. This knowledge has been built up over generations of observation and management and passed down.

The passing down of traditional knowledge is a seminal way in which we transmit Dja Dja Wurrung cultural heritage to our younger generations, and it is how we have maintained our cultural identity over the passage of time. Our Ancestors looked after Djandak, and we are duty bound to do the same.

The laws, customs and stories that make up our Dja Dja Wurrung Culture guides the way we behave and the decisions we make every day. We teach stories of pre-contact origin, the correct way to engage with Djandak, the importance of revisiting places as a way of connecting with our spirituality and culture and informing the decisions about the management of Dja Dja Wurrung places and sites. The spirits link us back through time in a continuing connection with our past and our traditions, and the stories instil our on-going relationship and respect for Djandak.



# Our Corporation

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation is a representative body for Dja Dja Wurrung People

Established in 2004, the Corporation has the following principal objectives and responsibilities:

- To promote the health and wellbeing of the Dja Dja Wurrung People.
- To protect and promote the laws, culture, property rights and human rights of Dja Dja Wurrung People.

In 2008, through the Corporation, Dja Dja Wurrung People gained Registered Aboriginal Party status to further the fight to be recognised as the Traditional Owners of Djandak.

After 15 years of intensive negotiations, the Corporation, on behalf of the Dja Dja Wurrung People, and the Victorian Government signed the Recognition and Settlement Agreement on 28 March 2013.

The Agreement is a means by which Dja Dja Wurrung tradition and the unique relationship of Dja Dja Wurrung People to Djandak is recognised, strengthened, protected, and promoted, for the benefit of all Victorians, now and into the future.

In 2021, we paid respect to our People and began trading as 'DJAARA – Balaki Wuka (Giving to community)'. Dja Dja Wurrung People will always be the foundation of the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

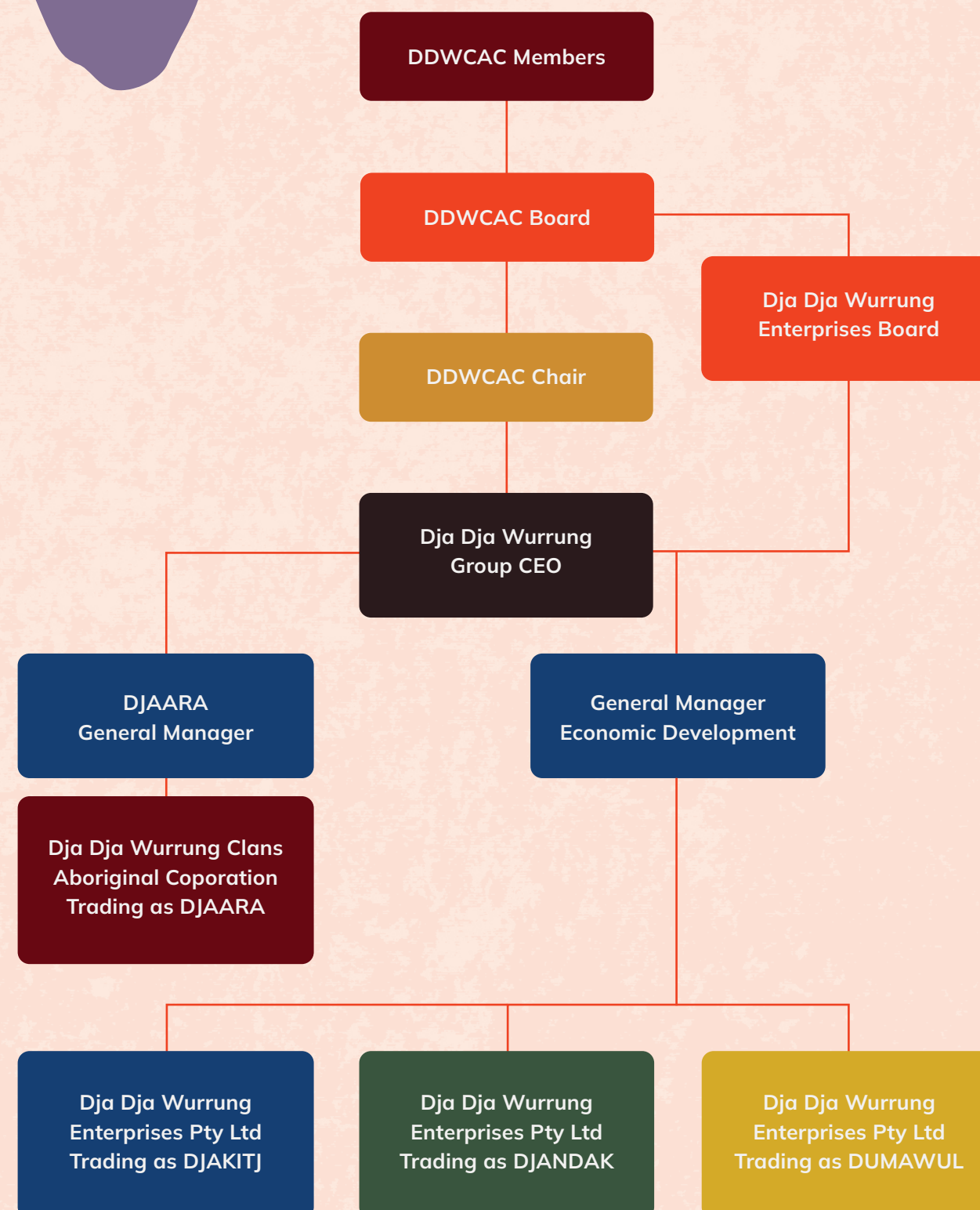
Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Pty Ltd trading as DJANDAK and DUMAWUL, operate as commercial businesses of Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation.

In 2023, DJAKITJ, a new Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprise launched. DJAKITJ is a new food and fibre company.

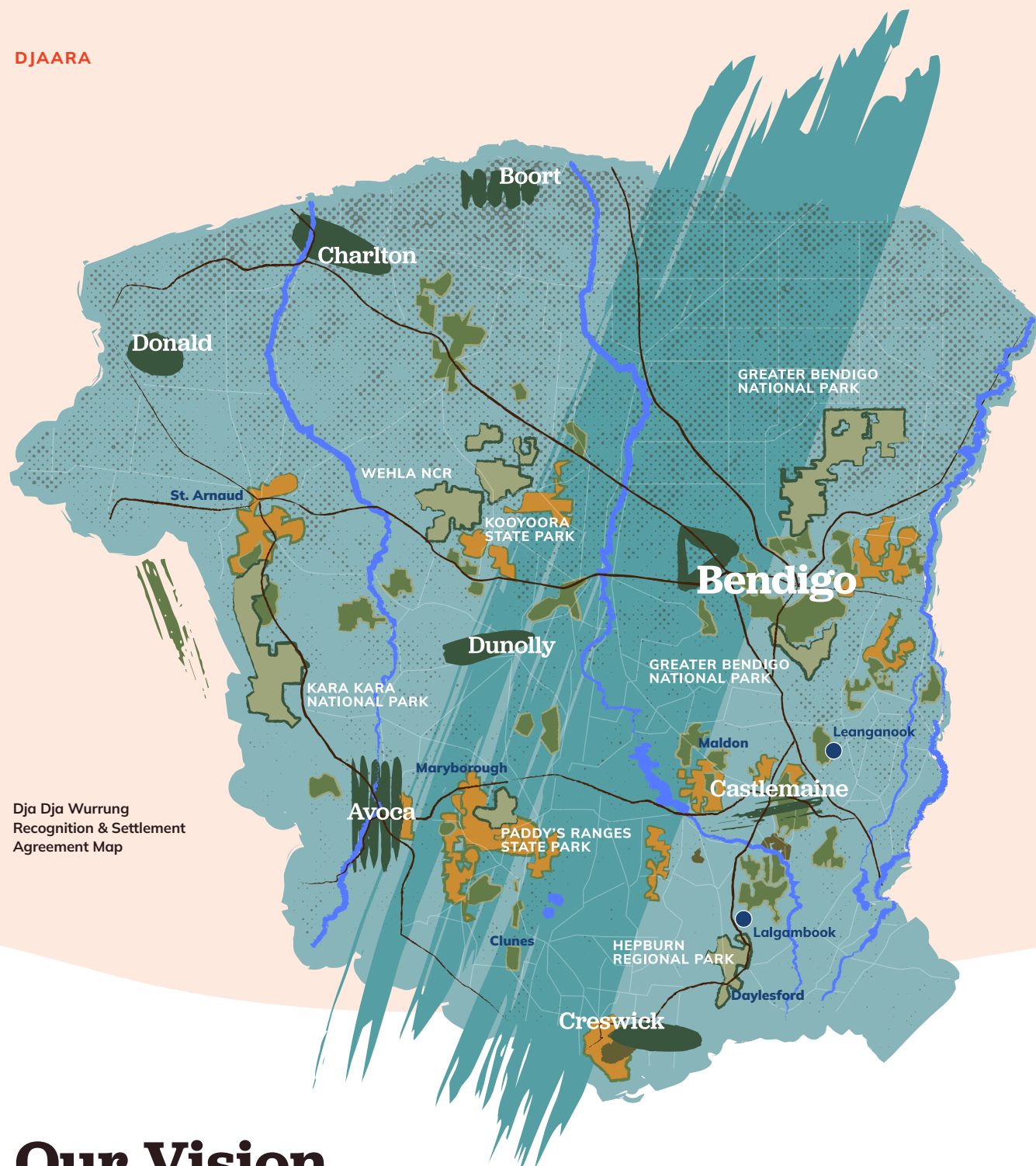
Together, DJAARA and its enterprises DJANDAK, DUMAWUL and DJAKITJ comprise the Dja Dja Wurrung Group.



DJAARA ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE (SIMPLIFIED)







## Our Vision

A thriving and sustainable Corporation with established interests across the Clan's traditional areas that are cultural, environmental, and economically beneficial for Traditional Owners and the wider community.

## Our Aspirations

Our Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Plan reaffirms our aspirations to Care for Country and determines the future of our People as the Traditional Owners of Djandak.

Our Country Plan is a 20-year plan setting out the community vision for our People.

- To be strong,
- Underpinned by our living culture,
- Our lands, and waters to be in good condition and actively managed to protect our values and
- The laws, culture, and rights of all Dja Dja Wurrung People to be promoted.

These goals give purpose to our work and are further developed to guide all land management on Djandak. DJAARA delivers a range of programs to meet these aspirations.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Community Goals for our Country are framed around the following themes:



### Goal 1 Djaara

Every Dja Dja Wurrung person is happy, healthy and secure in their identity, livelihood, and lifestyle



### Goal 5 Wanyarram - Rivers & Waterways

Our rivers and waterways are healthy and meet the needs of our People and land



### Goal 2 Cultural Practice & Customs

Dja Dja Wurrung customs and practices are alive and respected - keeping us connected to our past, our present and our future



### Goal 6 Land

Our upside-down Country is healthy again



### Goal 3 Malamiya | Cultural Heritage

Our Malamiya is recognised and promoted as a celebration of our identity and community



### Goal 7 Self - determination

As our Country's first People, Djaara have an established place in society and are empowered to manage our own affairs



### Goal 4 Bush Tucker & Medicine

Our Country continues to nourish us by providing bush tucker & medicine



### Goal 8 Traditional Owner Economy

We have a strong and diverse economic base to provide for our health and wellbeing and strengthen our living Culture



### Goal 9 Galkangu - Joint Management

All Crown Land on Dja Dja Wurrung Country is Aboriginal Title, and we are the sole managers



## Our Leadership

### A message from the Chair

#### Trent Nelson



Today, I reflect on the remarkable achievements of our Board, the challenges we face, and the profound significance of our roles as Directors of the Corporation.

This year has seen us accomplish great strides in our decision-making capabilities, offering crucial support to our Corporate and Business Enterprises.

Through our Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) with Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA), we have steered decisions for works on our beloved Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country), resulting in the tangible fruits of infrastructure development. Think of the Bendigo Law Courts and the Galkangu - Bendigo GovHub, among others. These are not just buildings; they are symbols of progress and the power of strong governance.

Our Board of Djaara Family representatives has consistently demonstrated its commitment to effective governance. We have met monthly, utilising our hybrid meeting model that alternates between face-to-face and online interactions. This approach has enabled us to make important decisions using our robust governance framework.

Each year, we grow stronger as a Board, thanks to the unwavering support of our dedicated Executive staff. They provide us with detailed briefing papers, expert presentations, and invaluable opportunities to enhance our financial literacy through Board development workshops. This commitment allows us to stay focused on governance decisions, steering clear of operational matters and supporting our managers across the Corporate and Enterprises businesses.

Yet, it's not always easy to navigate the dual worlds of our cultural responsibilities and the Western construct of corporate governance. As Chairperson, I firmly believe that this is Djaara's Corporation, and we have the autonomy to shape it to better support our families and future generations. It's a responsibility we embrace wholeheartedly across all areas of leadership.

One distinctive aspect of our Board is that our Directors never remove their cultural hats. Our decisions are deeply rooted in our cultural values. We manage our business in our unique Dja Dja Wurrung way while utilising Western structures to the betterment of this and future generations.

Serving as a Director is a significant voluntary commitment. We are accountable for representing our families during monthly Board meetings and may also participate in Djali Balak, the Finance, Audit and Risk Committee and the Investment Advisory Committee.

Our responsibilities for a monthly Board meeting, contain reading Board meeting papers, which can be 150 to 250 pages. The papers are meticulously detailed, ensuring that Directors are well-informed before meetings to provide the essential guidance for decision making.

The commitment as the Chair can change from week to week, varying from 5 to 15 hours per week. This time is spent replying to important emails, signing documents, attending meetings, and supporting DJAARA's reputation and relationships with other organisations and partners at hosted events.

Why do we take on the responsibility of a Director? I hold this role as a Director in high regard and importance as I am representing my Nelson family, my Clan and its members, as are all the Directors for each Family they represent. This role is not merely voluntary work; it's a vital part of steering the ship that is our Corporation.

For thousands of years, our People have built and developed their own governance structures, and being a Director is a modern form of that, in a family context. It's a legacy passed down through generations, a responsibility that we hold until the next generation is ready to continue the work.

Our Board's achievements, commitment, and dedication are testaments to our values. We are guardians of our Culture, our families, and our Corporation. Together, we continue to provide leadership towards a brighter future for us all.

Dumarr,

**Trent Nelson**  
Chairperson  
Director, Nelson Family Group



# Our Board of Directors

Our Board of Directors is responsible for the governance of the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC) trading as DJAARA.

The Board sets direction for the Dja Dja Wurrung Group and is responsible for the Group’s overall performance and compliance. Its duties include oversight, strategic planning, decision- making and financial planning.

*Board members are elected from the 18 family groups specified in the DDWCAC Constitution – descendants of our Martinga guli (Ancestors). Each family group may elect a Director and an Alternate Director.*

*Each Board member nominee must be a member of the Corporation and of the Family Group that nominated them. While members may have affiliation with any number of Martinga guli, they must identify with only one ancestral Family Group for directorship and voting purposes.*

*The involvement and dedication of the Directors and Alternate Directors is greatly appreciated. Through their work on behalf of their Family Groups and all Dja Dja Wurrung People, they make a vital contribution towards achieving the aspirations in the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan.*

*Three Board development sessions were held across the year for Directors and Alternate Directors to increase their knowledge and skills. During May, Board members were able to participate in a two-day ORIC governance training workshop, as well as online training sessions in governance and finance with another external provider.*



Mel Peters  
Director, Davis Family Group



Uncle Graham Atkinson  
Director, Malcolm Family Group



Belinda Duarte  
*Deputy Chairperson*  
Director, Robinson Family Group



Uncle Walter Harrison  
Director, Harrison Family Group



Peta Hudson  
Director, Curr Family Group



Trent Nelson  
*Chairperson*  
Director, Nelson Family Group



Aunty Sue Charles  
Director, Charles Family Group



Andrew Travis  
Director, King Girribong,  
Lerimburneen, Walpanumin  
Family Group



Boadan Kerr  
Director, Kerr Family Group



Deb Dunolly  
Director, Dunolly Family Group



Kayla Baksh  
Alternate Director,  
Dunolly Family Group



Mick Bourke  
Alternate Director,  
Nelson Family Group



Kerri Douglas  
Alternate Director,  
Malcolm Family Group

## BOARD MEETINGS

Eleven regular monthly Board meetings were held during the year, with the 2021-22 Annual General Meeting held on 26 November 2022. Meetings are held face-to-face and via online platforms.

- Standing items on the Board meeting agenda include Sorry Business, declarations of conflict of interest, Membership applications, language requests and financial management reports.
- The monthly Dja Dja Wurrung Group Report provides updates to the Board on activities across the Dja Dja Wurrung Group. All activities can be placed against achieving outcomes of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan 2014-2034.
- The Board receives regular updates on the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board, and other committees and groups on which there are Dja Dja Wurrung representatives

- Matters for decision brought to the Board include Land Use Activity Agreement matters and Board Briefing Papers prepared by Program Managers from DJAARA and Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises (DDWE).
- Documents provided regularly to the Board for noting include the minutes of meetings of the Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Board, the Investment Advisory Committee and the Finance Audit and Risk Committee.
- Communiques from organisations including the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN) and the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (VTOFL) are also provided for noting.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC) trading as DJAARA is the Traditional Owner Group Entity within the meaning of the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010. DDWCAC is the entity selected by the Dja Dja Wurrung people to hold and exercise the rights we secured under the Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria in 2013.

DDWCAC is established under the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006 (CATSI Act) and its operations are overseen by the Office of the Registrar of Aboriginal Corporations (ORIC). Our financial operations are audited on an annual basis and reported to ORIC.

The CATSI Act sets out the duties and responsibilities of Directors, which are consistent with the duties under common law and in the Corporations Act 2001. Board members are entrusted with establishing an appropriate system of corporate governance in a complex and rapidly changing environment. Directors also carry out significant additional responsibilities on Board committees and in representing Dja Dja Wurrung in external organisations and forums.



## A message from our Group CEO Rodney Carter



As we approach the end of our financial year, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the incredible journey the Dja Dja Wurrung Group have embarked upon together.

It is an honour to serve as the CEO of the Dja Dja Wurrung Group and to witness the remarkable strides we have made as an organisation.

Our mission to advance Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) rights has been at the heart of all that we do, and I am immensely proud of how we have translated this vision into action. Through collective efforts, we have achieved significant milestones, and our commitment to these goals remains unwavering.

To continue the great work of our organisation, one of our primary aspirations moving forward is to leverage the momentum of our achievements and seek greater investment in our endeavours. We've made remarkable strides, and it's time to explore opportunities for greater economic benefit. The recent purchase of our newest Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises' DJAKITJ property is a prime example of our commitment to expanding our assets. Just imagine the possibilities if we explore accommodation options, including hotels, among other strategic investments.

The Group has always been exceptional at seizing opportunities as they arise. However, we must acknowledge that this can sometimes stretch our resources. When faced with such challenges, we have consistently made practical decisions to cope with these pressures and allocate resources strategically.

The growth we've seen in our Corporate and Business Services is a testament to this adaptability and commitment to excellence.

As we reflect on our achievements, we can also see how our commitment to Dja Dja Wurrung rights has led to broader recognition of our accomplishments. I am extremely confident that as we continue to grow, more will be achieved in alignment with the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan, our guiding light.

The path of growth comes with its share of challenges, and our growth has been no exception. The sheer scale and complexity of our organization mean that we must continually reassess our structures and resources. While it's not always easy to predict our future size, we have put in place organizational structures that can effectively support our growth when adequately resourced. It is an exciting time for us, with the expansion of activities such as Wi (fire) and forest gardening and the exploration of new areas like farming and plant varieties for the future.

Speaking of growth, the need for accommodation, office spaces, and a depot location is evident across Djandak. Our Corporate and Community Centre, which we referred to as our "Home," is on track for completion next year.

The idea of our Corporate and Community Centre was initiated at the beginning of our Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA). It will provide us with a confirmed base to work, gather, and use as a launching pad for potential satellite locations across Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country).

The dedication of the project team and the involvement of our members to this project has been inspiring, and I share in the excitement about moving in and inviting others to join us.

Our strategies, including Galk-galk Dhelkunya, Nyauwi Mutjeka, and Climate Change Strategies, are the offspring of our Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan. They are growing smarter and brighter, guiding our journey, and advocating for generations to come.

Our Enterprises are the vehicles for greater economic prosperity for us all. They empower entrepreneurs within our community, and they are beginning to associate with the power of the broader DJAARA brand. For DJANDAK, DUMAWUL, and DJAKIJT you will begin to see our wider Family brand present in all that we do. We look forward to the exciting possibilities that lie ahead.

All that we have accomplished would not be possible without our Board, staff and our members.

I acknowledge the exceptional leadership of our Boards, both Corporate and Enterprises. None of our achievements would be possible without their solid governance foundation. Their commitment to our vision and attention to detail

are outstanding. I extend my deepest gratitude to all our Board members and, in particular, to our Chairperson, Trent Nelson, for his consistent leadership and representation.

I want to take a moment to express my heartfelt gratitude to all our staff. Your contributions, dedication, and the brilliance you bring to our collective effort fill me with an immense sense of pride. I often find myself reflecting on our accomplishments and wishing for more time to connect. Your selfless dedication is what makes our organisation and Djaara's Martinga guli (Ancestors) proud, and it makes me the proudest CEO.

Our Dja Dja Wurrung members, your passion, dedication, and participation provide important contributions to the many projects across the Group. I am continually amazed and immensely proud of what we have collectively accomplished.

As we move forward, let us remember that our journey is one of continuous growth and progress. Together, we will explore new horizons, achieve even greater heights, and continue to make a positive impact for our community, our Country, and the generations that follow.

Dumarr (Thank you) all for your unwavering support and dedication.

Dhelkup murrupuk (Give good spirit),

**Rodney Carter**

Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO



## A message from our DJAARA General Manager



This year, we continued to respectfully push the boundaries on our rights activation.

We continued to protect and extend Djaara Traditional Owner rights through negotiations under the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) and Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA).

We secured more appropriate outcomes as compensation for acts that impact Traditional Owner rights, by applying the High Court of Australia's Timber Creek decision.

We exercised Djaara rights and knowledge by developing the Galk-galk Dhelkunya (Healthy Forests) strategy and leading in storm recovery in the Wombat Forest.

We began developing economic opportunities for Djaara by securing funding for DJAARA timbers, which finds ways to make income from salvaged timber.

We worked to increase recognition within the wider community of Djaara's right to manage forests directed by Dja Dja Wurrung practices and knowledge.

We developed the terms of reference for a 5-yearly review of the RSA to make the agreement more efficient and expand recognition of Djaara rights.

We developed Nyauwi Mutjeka, our renewable energy strategy, to highlight Dja Dja Wurrung commitment to Country health and renewable energy and create economic opportunities for Dja Dja Wurrung People from the Strategy.

We took steps to develop a housing strategy designed to improve the availability of affordable, decent housing on Country for Dja Dja Wurrung People.

We are implementing a first-of-its-kind peace agreement with the City of Greater Bendigo.

We made high-level representations to government to promote awareness of the RSA, and Members' needs and rights.

We continued to re-introduce Djandak Wi (Country fire) to Country to manage Country back to health.

We used our rights, responsibilities, and powers as a Recognised Aboriginal Party to protect Malamiya (Cultural Heritage).

The growth of DJAARA means more job opportunities for Djaara. The growth also means more can be done to protect and extend our rights and opportunities.

The growth reflects increasing recognition of Dja Dja Wurrung People's presence, unique status, skills and intentions. The growth of DJAARA means more activities for Members, more input from Members, and more opportunities to celebrate surviving Dja Dja Wurrung culture.

It was a proud moment for us to celebrate the start of construction on our Hattam Street corporate and community centre, the future home of DJAARA. To pay respect to Culture, we held a garni ceremony: we replaced the usual photo op of shovels with a garni (digging stick) piercing the soil instead. Having our elders present our children dancing as the cleansing smoke gently travelled across the site was a magical moment. We look forward to moving in next year, bringing our corporate family together and strengthening our relationships and collaboration.

We were lucky enough to hold many beautiful events with our Members this year, and we are very proud of the role Members have played in our work through the many flexible employment opportunities.

Through our Wartaka's, Members have significantly contributed to many group projects, giving so much knowledge, guidance, wisdom, and time. We are so grateful for your involvement and contributions. Dumarr (Thank you).

I want to say a big thank you to all Members and staff for your commitment, passion, and patience as we navigate our way through a period of rapid growth. Pushing the boundaries of our rights activation and doing things for the first time isn't always easy, and we are not always perfect. We are, however, committed to growing and learning together. I truly believe what the Dja Dja Wurrung People have achieved is visionary. Leading the way in many areas says so much about your vision, commitment, and strength as a People.

Batak (Take care),

**Cassandra Lewis**

DJAARA General Manager





# A digging stick ceremony for our new Dja Dja Wurrung centre

On 16 June, DJAARA held a traditional garni (digging stick) ceremony to mark the start of construction of our Dja Dja Wurrung Corporate and Community Centre on Hattam Street, Golden Square.



*This year, we celebrate the 10th anniversary of our Recognition and Settlement Agreement. Today is a critical moment in our Dja Dja Wurrung history - the beginning of construction on our new corporate home. It will be a place for us to work together to create a future for Central Victorians that would make all of our Dja Dja Wurrung Ancestors proud.*

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

Our CEO Rodney Carter and Board Chair Trent Nelson were joined by Dja Dja Wurrung Elders and community, the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples Gabrielle Williams and then Deputy Premier, Member for Bendigo East Jacinta Allan to celebrate the milestone.

## THE CORPORATE AND COMMUNITY CENTRE, A LONG-STANDING DREAM OF DJAARA'S.

The centre will revitalise the site of the former Golden Square High School, which has lain bare since the school was demolished in 2009.

The centre will be the permanent base for the Dja Dja Wurrung Group's corporate and business operations.

The design of the Corporate and Community Centre is complete. A Dja Dja Wurrung Wartaka (Dja Dja Wurrung knowledge group), of DJAARA Members, has provided input to include cultural aspects within the structure of the building in the form of artistic designs and cultural artifacts and representation.

The centre will house a growing collection of Cultural Heritage artefacts, DJAARA's emerging agriculture business, and the expansion of cultural and natural resource management services.

It will also be a venue for arts and cultural events, and a multi-purpose space that can be used by other businesses and the wider public.

Features will include a general-purpose laboratory, spaces for learning and interaction, a theatrette, meeting areas, yarning and ceremonial spaces, and areas for reflection.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Corporate and Community Centre will be built on land that the Victorian Government handed back to Dja Dja Wurrung People in February 2022. The government has also provided \$11.288 million to develop and construct the centre.

DJAARA is leading the project in partnership with the State Government, City of Greater Bendigo and The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.



*Our corporate home will help us to realise economic opportunities and become self-sustaining. It will honour the survival of Dja Dja Wurrung People. Here, we will celebrate and share our Culture, heal our People, and improve community wellbeing.*

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO





## DJAARA signs a unique partnership agreement with Greater Bendigo

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and the City of Greater Bendigo signed a unique agreement “Yilingga Marna” (“shake hands”) in a ceremony at Wanyarra Dum (Frog Ponds) in December.

Our CEO Rodney Carter described the 12-month agreement – the first of its kind in Australia – as a milestone in peace making, and a model that may be used in future agreements with other jurisdictions.



*This agreement lifts the relationship between DJAARA and the City out of the 19th century and to something that is respectable in the 21st century.*

Rodney Carter CEO



City of Greater Bendigo CEO Craig Niemann and Mayor Andrea Metcalf signing the Yilingga Marna agreement with our Board Chair Trent Nelson and CEO Rodney Carter.



City of Greater Bendigo CEO Craig Niemann, DJAARA General Manager Cassandra Lewis, City of Greater Bendigo Mayor Andrea Metcalf, Board Chair Trent Nelson, City of Greater Bendigo Director Andrew Cooney, and our CEO Rodney Carter.

The existing Land Use Activity Agreement in DJAARA's 2013 Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria was cumbersome to work with – for the City and for DJAARA.

The two organisations have worked collaboratively and in genuine partnership to come up with a unique solution, which we believe will work better for both of us and the communities we service.

The relationship that this agreement reflects and enables means we can renegotiate as required to make sure it continues to work for mutual benefit. Yilingga Marna will create more efficiency and more certainty for both organisations. Instead of holding a separate negotiation for each individual land-use proposal, one single agreement has been negotiated for all council-led projects over a 12 month period.

The Yilingga Marna agreement contains a range of other benefits around land rehabilitation, employment, language, signage, and Cultural Heritage protection.

The agreement also delivers on a number of commitments in the City's Barpangu Reconciliation Plan to help Dja Dja Wurrung People deliver on their priorities to heal Country.

City of Great Bendigo's CEO Craig Niemann said he was proud of the signed agreement and looked forward to it strengthening the City's productive working relationship with DJAARA.



*As we continue to invest in this relationship, we learn more about the priorities of each organisation and, in turn, are supporting each other to deliver great outcomes,*

Craig Niemann, City CEO

It's hoped this agreement could be a model for Local Government across Australia to support reconciliation with, and self-determination of, Traditional Owners.



Scan the QR code to view the Yilingga Marna launch



## The Yilingga Marna agreement ('to shake hands') came about through several years of negotiation between DJAARA and the City of Greater Bendigo.

Both DJAARA and the City recognised that compensation for Dja Dja Wurrung calculated under the RSA's Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA) based on the value of the land, as well as the application of the principles of the High Court's decision in Timber Creek had the potential to impact the viability of some projects for the City and compensation payable to DJAARA.

Yilingga Marna was the solution to this problem. Compensation is now fixed at a percentage of total project costs per annum, and additional and ongoing works for DJANDAK on each project are guaranteed, for healing Country.



Our Board Chair Trent Nelson presented Mayor Andrea Metcalf with a possum skin cloak during the Yilingga Marna signing ceremony, reflecting the trusting and respectful relationship between the two organisations.

DJAARA General Manager, Cassandra Lewis and City of Greater Bendigo Director Andrew Cooney established the agreement, which is the first of its kind between Traditional Owners and a local government authority in Australia, in December 2022.

The agreement works towards the creation of a partnership and Treaty-like agreement between DJAARA, and the City underpinned by goodwill, harmony and trust that furthers Dja Dja Wurrung self-determination and economic self-sufficiency. Essentially a peace plan, the agreement also functions to also heal past difficulties to create mutually beneficial outcomes for future generations of Dja Dja Wurrung as well as community living within the City of Greater Bendigo.

Yilingga Marna also ensures:

- a greater level of oversight for the Malamiya team to protect Dja Dja Wurrung Cultural Heritage
- regular partnership and governance meetings between the DJAARA Board and the City
- opportunities for Dja Dja Wurrung to demonstrate education and leadership for the local community
- a welcoming environment for Dja Dja Wurrung to return to Country
- a more efficient way to manage local infrastructure projects and maintenance
- delivery of naming and employment opportunities
- the City realises DJAARA's aspiration to become land manager of all Crown land and actively supports opportunities to transfer management of reserve land to DJAARA.



City of Greater Bendigo CEO Craig Niemann and Mayor Andrea Metcalf signing the Yilingga Marna agreement with our Board Chair Trent Nelson and CEO Rodney Carter.



## IMPLEMENTATION

Yilingga Marna is currently in implementation phase and regular discussions between DJAARA, and the City occur to 'trouble shoot' issues and challenges as they arise. The agreement has been extended a further 12 months until June 2024.

Our Yilingga Marna outcomes to date include:

- Seven land use activity projects have been facilitated under Yilingga Marna with cross team collaboration between the City, DJAARA and DJANDAK. Guaranteed work for DJANDAK on these projects has been ensured as well as economic benefits payable to DJAARA at a percentage of the total project costs for this financial year.
- The City will provide DJAARA and DJANDAK with early notification of upcoming land use projects to ensure Dja Dja Wurrung People, DJAARA and DJANDAK have greater capacity to scope and input at the feasibility stage.
- DJAARA and DJANDAK are currently providing input into three site plans and structure plans for new developments.
- An umbrella s45 is near completion, which will alleviate the administrative burden of the requirement for a s45 for every land use activity. (An s45 is a contract between parties (DJAARA and the City), and is a legal requirement under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic))
- Work has begun in preparation to transfer land management of four sites on Country to DJAARA. The City is currently the committee of Management for these sites.
- Training has been offered to the City on Cultural Heritage Requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic) and the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 (Vic).
- Training has been offered to the City on the Yilingga Marna agreement and the Dja Dja Wurrung RSA more broadly to ensure the City's obligations under both are understood across the City's different directorates.
- Internal yarns and Q&A sessions have occurred across DJAARA teams about the Yilingga Marna agreement and its intent and vision. This has included discussions about previous challenges and how the agreement can potentially solve these and better support DJAARA teams.
- DJAARA's HR team will embed information on Yilingga Marna into the onboarding process for all new starters.



# Welcoming babies to Country

DJAARA hosted a Welcome Baby to Country ceremony, in partnership with Bendigo Health, for all babies born on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, at the Garden for the Future on Wednesday 16 November.



*It's part of traditional Dja Dja Wurrung Culture to formally Welcome new babies to Country*

Cassandra Lewis  
Djaara General Manager



Scan the QR code to share in our Welcome Baby to Country Ceremony.



DJAARA Members and staff at the Welcome Baby to Country event.

The Welcome Baby to Country ceremony honours and acknowledges an infant's connection to the lands on which they are born.

For Dja Dja Wurrung People, the smoking ceremony and traditional Welcome offers wellbeing and protection and connects Baby to Country.

More than 50 families participated in the event, which was for Dja Dja Wurrung and non-Indigenous babies aged up to 36 months.

Families were invited to participate in the smoking ceremony. Babies were then individually welcomed to Country by Dja Dja Wurrung Elders and presented with a certificate and cultural gifts.

Bendigo Health Board Chair Dr Ewa Piejko said it was a privilege for Bendigo Health to host the event with DJAARA, highlighting the importance



*In practising Culture on Country and passing our traditions to a new generation, we uphold our Cultural obligations.*

Cassandra Lewis  
Djaara General Manager

of connection to a child's sense of identity and belonging.

Holding this ceremony has also contributed to healing Dja Dja Wurrung People from the impacts of colonisation.

It's also significant for us to share our Culture with the wider community.

DJAARA values the partnership with Bendigo Health, which enabled us to share this special ceremony.





# MALAMIYA MANG ARTS FESTIVAL

A Dja Dja Wurrung Arts Festival, a first for Bendigo – proudly presented by DUMAWUL, a Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprise.



Dja Dja Wurrung artwork featured throughout The Malamiya Mang Arts Festival art exhibition.

Residents and visitors to Bendigo had the opportunity to immerse themselves in Dja Dja Wurrung arts and Culture at Malamiya Mang, a five-day Dja Dja Wurrung Arts Festival in April this year.

The festival included a free art exhibition showcasing the works of talented Dja Dja Wurrung artists, arts and craft market, workshops, and Cultural tours led by Dja Dja Wurrung tour guides.

Festival Producer Sarah Lowe said Malamiya Mang (which means 'Then and Now') as a contemporary celebration of the world's oldest continuing Culture.

“

*Malamiya Mang Arts Festival is a first for Bendigo, which draws on the connection of Dja Dja Wurrung Country and People from the past to the here and now.*

Sarah Lowe  
DUMAWUL



Many gathered for the Welcome to Country and smoking ceremony at the Malamiya Mang Arts Festival arts market.



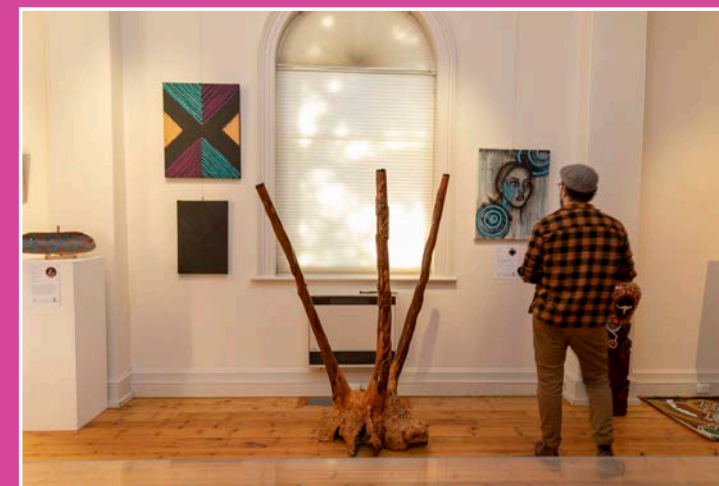
Dja Dja Wurrung artwork featured throughout The Malamiya Mang Arts Festival art exhibition.

A beautiful quote from Dja Dja Wurrung Elder Aunty Fay Carter that really encapsulated the spirit of Malamiya Mang:

“

*I'd like the rest of the world to know that Dja Dja Wurrung still exist. We are still here as a People. We are proud and value our Culture. We honour our Martinga guli (Ancestors), and everything that we do, we are doing on behalf of our Martinga guli, who didn't have the voice that we have today.*

Aunty Fay Carter



Visitors were able to purchase artworks from the exhibition, which ran from Wednesday 12 to Monday 17 April, and buy craft at the market during the official opening on Thursday 13 April.

Weekend workshops enabled participants to learn d helped tour participants develop a stronger connection with Dja Dja Wurrung Country, and a deeper understanding and appreciation of Dja Dja Wurrung Culture – then and now.

DUMAWUL supports and nurtures Dja Dja Wurrung artists and community, ensuring culturally safe workplace practices for Dja Dja Wurrung creatives, Elders, and community.

If you missed this year's festival, Malamiya Mang will return in 2024. You will have an opportunity to immerse yourself in the rich diversity of Dja Dja Wurrung arts, stories, workshops, and Culture in this exciting new festival.

Learn more about Dumawul on p 123.





# Our Newest Enterprise

DJAARA launched a new food and fibre enterprise, DJAKITJ, which means 'dining room' in Dja Dja Wurrung language, at the group's new property near Bendigo in May.

DJAKITJ is developing several projects around native Australian ingredients – including possibly the largest yabby farm in the southern hemisphere.

The enterprise has been a long-held dream. DJAKITJ is all about **dhehkunya beng** – nourishing the body.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Group spent a year finding the right property. Purchasing the land was a commercial decision to develop an agricultural business. Meanwhile, hundreds of hours have gone into research and planning, and a rigorous due diligence program.

DJAKITJ's flagship project is a yabby farm. When built, it will incorporate more than 50 yabby ponds a brood stock and hatchery facility as well as research and development areas for both aquaculture and native plants and bush foods.

Construction is scheduled to begin in the second half of 2023, with the first harvest anticipated in late 2024.



*This is a significant milestone for us. For the first time, DJAARA has invested its own funds - \$1.6 million - to buy our own land back so we can set up this exciting business.*

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

Moving forward, the enterprise will focus on a range of food and fibre opportunities. DJAKITJ aims to diversify production at the farm and will look to incorporate elements of education and training.

Along with business profits, the farm will create employment opportunities for Dja Dja Wurrung People.

DJAARA is delighted to be working with the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation (ILSC) who are supporting Dja Dja Wurrung self-determination by providing funding for capital costs to establish the yabby farm.

Support from the ILSC has been crucial. Not only has it made the operation possible; ILSC has guided DJAARA through the process.



*This is a fantastic achievement for DJAARA who have worked hard to bring this project to life.*

Joe Morrison  
ILSC Group Chief Executive Officer

DJAARA looks forward to a continued and fruitful partnership over the coming years.

ILSC Group Chief Executive Officer Joe Morrison said assisting First Nations People with the return and management of their Country is at the heart of the ILSC.

This project demonstrates ILSC's ability to partner in bringing lands and waters back together through the return of water rights to Dja Dja Wurrung People.

The ILSC has provided more than \$3.5 million in grant funds to ensure that DJAKITJ will continue to strengthen the Dja Dja Wurrung People's connection to Country.



*DJAKITJ is a step on the road towards self-determination - a step towards a strong and diverse economic base for Dja Dja Wurrung People.*

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO



DJAARA Board Chair Trent Nelson, Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Rodney Carter, ILSC Group CEO Joe Morrison, Djakitj Business Manager Dan Duggan.



Find out more about the DJAKITJ launch by scanning the QR code.





# Expanding our Cultural burning program to care for Country

DJAARA and DJANDAK are working together to re-establish the practice of Djandak Wi (Country fire) on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, after receiving funding through the Victorian Government's Cultural Fire Grants program.

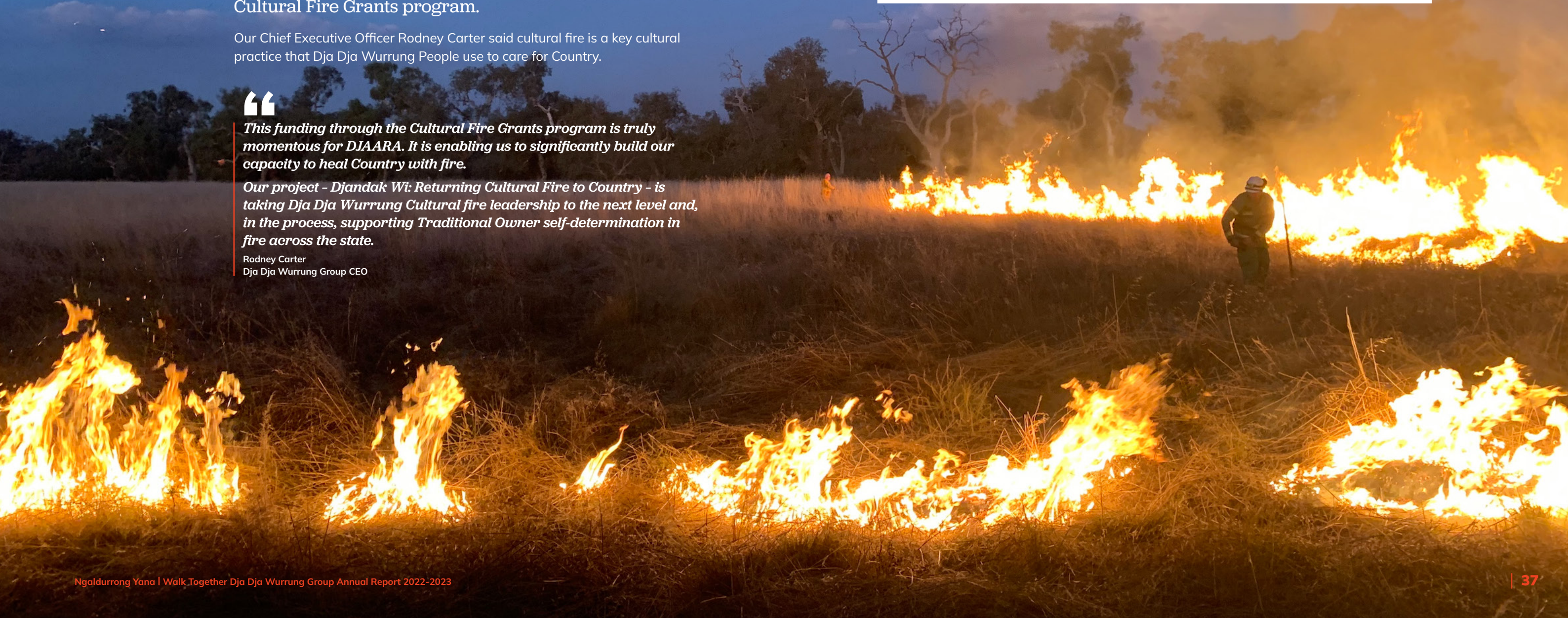
Our Chief Executive Officer Rodney Carter said cultural fire is a key cultural practice that Dja Dja Wurrung People use to care for Country.



*This funding through the Cultural Fire Grants program is truly momentous for DJAARA. It is enabling us to significantly build our capacity to heal Country with fire.*

*Our project - Djandak Wi: Returning Cultural Fire to Country - is taking Dja Dja Wurrung Cultural fire leadership to the next level and, in the process, supporting Traditional Owner self-determination in fire across the state.*

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO





The project is bringing direct benefits to Dja Dja Wurrung People, including increased employment in fire positions. We are creating training and development pathways for Djandak Wi practitioners.

DJAARA has been working with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to incorporate cultural burning into the State's planned burns regime for the last five years.

This funding will further strengthen our partnerships with DEECA and other land managers, and enable Dja Dja Wurrung People to have increased decision making and independence in fire delivery.

The legacy of this project will include a comprehensive plan for Cultural fire practice into the future.



Djandak Wi involves seasonal burning and careful stewardship over a long period of time. Following the principle of “right fire, right place, right time”, small patch burning methods or “cool burns” are carried out at specific places and times of the year.

Djandak Wi Practitioners use clues in the landscape to understand where and how to apply fire. Following burns, practitioners have observed healing changes to Country such as reduction of weeds and re- emergence of native species. The more Dja Dja Wurrung People are out walking and burning Country, the more learning about seasonal indicators occurs.

“*We must ensure Dja Dja Wurrung can continue to deliver fire in years to come, and better respond to fire risk and climate change impacts on Country.*”

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

The project includes a series of pilot burns, with partners, to demonstrate how Cultural fire can be used to improve different landscapes.

The Cultural Fire Grants program is a Victorian Government initiative that supports Traditional Owners to lead the practice of cultural burning and their unique pathway for creating healthy Country and communities.

Read more about our work delivering Djandak Wi on p 75 and p 120.





# Bendigo Law Courts Opens

The opening of the Bendigo Law Courts was a momentous occasion for DJAARA.

Prior to the proceedings, Dja Dja Wurrung Group Board members, staff, Dja Dja Wurrung artists and original Wartaka members were part of smoking and cleansing ceremony of the building.



Rebecca Phillips and Aunty Marilyn Nicholls next to their sculptural water element at the Bendigo Law Courts forecourt area.



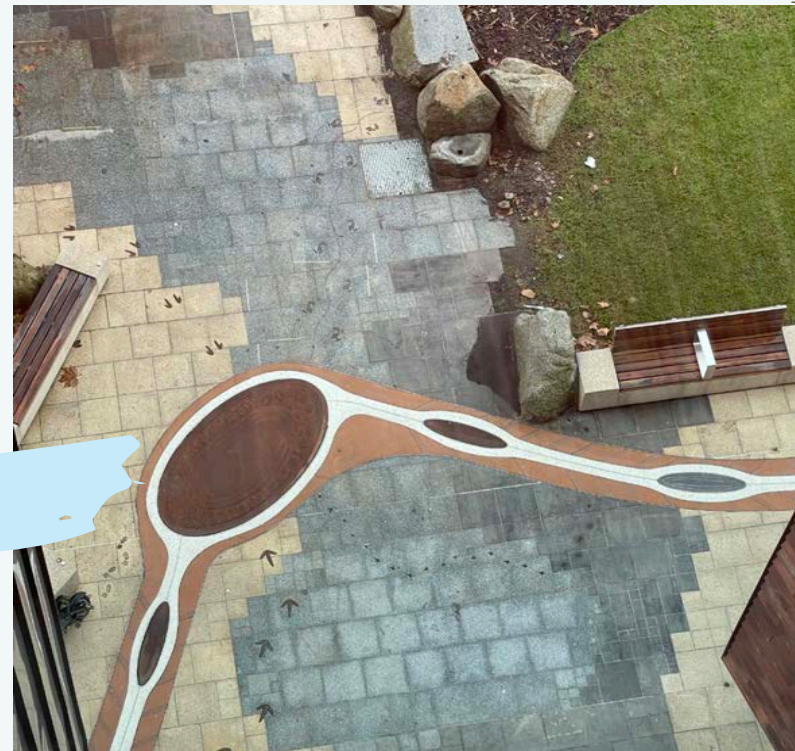
Dja Dja Wurrung artists Natasha Carter and Jason Kerr creating wood burning artwork in the Bendigo Law Courts Koori Courtroom.

DJAARA's collaboration with the State and Court Services Victoria has enabled the creation of a very powerful yet vulnerable place for people to come together under Australian law and Dja Dja Wurrung Lore.

It is only fitting as our creator spirit, Bunjil is featured on the building, to look over and protect everyone who enters this building.

Artists that feature throughout the building are Troy Firebrace, Jida Gulpilil, Racquel Kerr, Jason Kerr, Daikota Nelson, Natasha Carter, Aunty Marilyn Nicholls and Rebecca Phillips.

Bendigo Law Courts landscape designed by Aspect Studios with Djaara Wartaka members, including integrated artwork by Aunty Marilyn Nicholls and Rebecca Phillips.

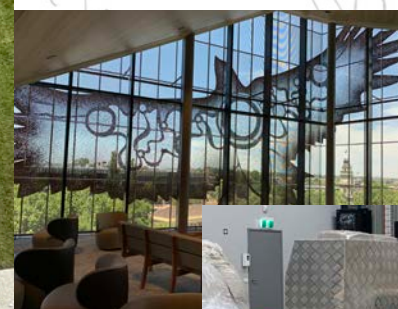


Bendigo Law Courts opening event with staff, Members and Board members

## DJAARA-FYING PUBLIC SPACES

DJANDAK are leading the way in architecture that reflects Dja Dja Wurrung Culture in places that are currently dominated by colonial architecture and ways of designing.

Find out more about how they are changing the skyline of Bendigo on p 108.



Dja Dja Wurrung artist Rebecca Phillips at the Djandak workshop constructing the sculpture for the Bendigo Law Courts.



Cast iron emu foot sculpted by Rebecca Phillips for the Bendigo Law Courts sculpture.



See more about the Bendigo Law Courts Opening event.



# Balaki Wurrekang | Community engagement

## ENGAGING OUR MEMBERS

DJAARA’s principal objectives are to promote the health and wellbeing of Dja Dja Wurrung People, and to protect and promote the laws, Culture, property rights and human rights of Dja Dja Wurrung People.

Our Members – direct descendants of the Dja Dja Wurrung Apical Ancestors – are pivotal. We need their support and guidance to achieve these objectives and to meet the goals and aspirations in our Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan.

Members provide input and help guide important decisions about how DJAARA is run, who it’s governed by and how we manage the services we provide. The Member Engagement team is the first link between Members and staff at DJAARA and its enterprises.

“  
*My favourite part about working with DJAARA is getting to know so many incredible people and being a small part of their lives. Helping to create happy, healthy families*  
Brittney Hawkes  
Member Engagement Program Manager

## DJA DJA WURRUNG COMMUNITY SUPPORT

One way that DJAARA helps promote the wellbeing of Dja Dja Wurrung People is through our Community Support Program.

The program supports Members by removing financial barriers. Various funding streams are available through the program, to:

- relieve the financial stress of education and gaining employment by increasing opportunities for Dja Dja Wurrung People to access training and educational
- increase the health and wellbeing of Dja Dja Wurrung People and actively support participation in sporting activities
- relieve the financial burden of Sorry Business
- support Dja Dja Wurrung People to develop their own businesses
- celebrate our Elders’ milestone birthdays
- support Dja Dja Wurrung People to move back onto Djandak
- support annual family group meetings so family groups can discuss matters important to them.

All the programs are assessed on a need’s basis and the guidelines limit allocations per year.

“  
*My favourite part of working with DJAARA is at events meeting and greeting Members in person. I hope to meet every Member someday.*  
Hannah Dunolly Lee  
Events Coordinator – Cultural Events

At June 2023, DJAARA had 460 Members, who were from the following family groups:

Family Group	Members
Charles	86
Curr	21
Davis	14
Dunolly	20
Harrison	45
Jackson	4
Kerr	53
King Girribong Lerimburneen Walpanumin	34
Malcolm	33
Nelson	96
Robinson	25
Terrick	26
No Family groups	3

## SUPPORT PROGRAM FUNDING PROVIDED IN 2022/23

Community Support Program	Amount
Primary Education	\$7101.61
Secondary Education	\$15752.00
Tertiary Education	\$12954.00
Elite Sports	\$2000.00
Healthy Living Subsidy	\$1417.93
Micro Business	\$5847.97
Sorry Business	\$9000.00
Driver’s License Program	\$1687.00
Elders Celebration	\$8108.00
Moving back to country	\$2000.00
Family Group Meeting	\$2837.94
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$68706.45</b>

## BALAKI WURREKANG EVENTS

The Member Engagement Team coordinates a range of cultural events that foster Culture and support our Members to connect.

Events this year have included a DJAARA Family Day, Welcome Baby to Country event, Wirama Shield football and netball matches, Charlton Cup, Women’s healing retreat, leading the Bendigo Easter Parade, Dja Dja Wurrung dance sessions, and Dja Dja Wurrung adornment sessions.

DJAARA also supported Aunty Ros Dodson with the launch of her book Mooie’s Stories in May.



# Easter Family Day

More than 100 DJAARA Members caught up at the DJAARA Family Day on Easter Saturday where kids enjoyed deadly activities including face painting, a climbing wall, jewellery making workshop, jumping castle, native animals - and a massive Easter egg hunt.

DJAARA's Member Events team organised the day, which was held at the Bendigo Botanic Gardens' Garden for the Future.

“*My favourite part of working with DJAARA is the interaction with everyone but especially the Members, a number have become friends and feel like family.*”

Jenni Chaloner, Event Coordinator  
Corporate Events and special projects



Dja Dja Wurrung Elders Aunty Linda Ford and Aunty Fay Carter were all smiles at the DJAARA Family Day.



The kids are off on their search for easter eggs.



Boaden Kerr and his nephew Shannen Saunders.



The kids loved the face painting.

# Easter Parade



DJAARA led the way in the Bendigo Easter Parade.

# Charlton Cup Race Day

The Wednesday after Easter saw Members and staff head to the races in Charlton for the DJAARA Cup, an annual event at the Charlton Harness Racing Club, sponsored by DJAARA.



DJAARA Members and staff enjoy a day at the Charlton Harness Racing Club for the DJAARA Cup.



DJAARA Cup winner Wiradjuri woman Amelia Wallace, with mum Jess Reid and our CEO Rodney Carter.



The DJAARA Cup.



# Supporting our Members

Chris Boland, proud Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta boxer took out the Golden Gloves at the prestigious Golden Gloves tournament in Brisbane in August.

DJAARA was delighted to help Chris get to the tournament through our Elite Sports Community Support Program

Chris's family are DJAARA Members, so when Chris's Nan called and explained that Chris and his coach were seeking sponsorship to cover flights to Brisbane and accommodation, DJAARA pitched in funds from the program.



Chris Boland.

Even sweeter, Chris won the tournament on his Nan's birthday who was watching ringside.

DJAARA's Elite Sports Community Support Program is available to help Members cover some of the costs associated with high level sports so Dja Dja Wurrung People like Chris can take up opportunities.

Members can also take advantage of other programs through DJAARA's Community Support Fund, for example, for assistance with funeral expenses or schooling. Contact the Member Engagement team for details.



Aunty Ros Kneebone-Dodson with her storybook, Mooie's Stories.

## Dja Dja Wurrung Elder shares children's stories in new book

Dja Dja Wurrung Elder, grandmother and Barnardos Mother of the Year 2012, Aunty Ros Kneebone-Dodson, launched her children's book Mooie's Stories in May at Castlemaine's Buda Historic Home & Garden.

Aunty Ros, who goes by the kin name BurWhela, meaning Mother Possum, shares Dreamtime stories she learned from her own mother, "Mooie", and Dja Dja Wurrung words and placenames in this beautifully illustrated book.



Rodney Carter with Aunty Ros Kneebone-Dodson.

“*Being able to know my oral history through the privilege of storytelling, passing this historic account from my Apical Ancestors to my children and grandchildren, I have been entrusted to preserve our Cultural stories as told to me by my mother and my grandmother before & her mother before.*”

Aunty Ros Kneebone-Dodson



Aunty Ros Kneebone-Dodson reads her book Mooie's Stories to DJAARA staff member Julian and his daughter, Aoife.

Our CEO Rodney Carter congratulated Aunty Ros on her beautiful telling of the Ancestor's stories from the Loddon River Country on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country).

“On behalf of DJAARA, I am delighted and honoured to celebrate the launch of this stunning book,” Rodney said.

“BurWhela” Ros Kneebone-Dodson is a descendant of the Bpangarang and Dja Dja Wurrung peoples of Victoria and the Worrimi and Birripi peoples of the lakes district of NSW.

As a child, Ros's family called her “Possum”, which in Dja Dja Wurrung language is “Whela”. As a mother, Ros took on the kin name of “BurWhela”, meaning “Mother Possum”.

Ros later became a social worker, assisting 14 members of the Stolen Generation to find their



Kerri Douglas, DJAARA Alternate Director conducts the Smoking and Welcome Ceremony.



families, and helped create the Building Strong Mothers and Babies program for Indigenous parents.

Mooie's Stories vividly brings to life the traditional stories of Loddon River Country for children aged 5 to 10 years.



Aunty Ros Kneebone-Dodson (centre) with Publishing Assistant Tara Wighton and Publishing Manager Simone Calderwood.

Aligning with the Australian Curriculum, the book will be an important resource for educators and students to learn about the First Nations stories from Djandak, the Loddon River Country. Teacher notes contain many engaging and informative activities for students in early and middle years.

Mooie's Stories, written and illustrated by “BurWhela” Ros Kneebone-Dodson is published by Aboriginal Studies Press and is available at [shop.aiatsis.gov.au](http://shop.aiatsis.gov.au).



Aunty Ros Kneebone-Dodson (centre) with family members, Paul, Toby, Rob, Aidan, Harley, Anna, Louise, Eric, Liz, Kerri & Jacinta.





# Talking Treaty

Djaara's journey towards Treaty continued to develop in the past year. Djaara man Trent Nelson continued his role as Dja Dja Wurrung Reserved Seat on the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (the Assembly), the body responsible for representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians in progressing towards Statewide and Traditional Owner Treaties.

In the final stages of its first term, the Assembly laid the foundations for Treaty-making, including:

- the Treaty Authority: this independent body consisting of First Nations People will be responsible for overseeing the negotiation of Treaties, such that all involved parties are respectful of Aboriginal Lore and Cultural Authority.
- the Treaty Negotiation Framework: establishes the ground rules for any Treaty negotiations. Includes the who, what, and how to ensure that any Statewide or Traditional Owner Treaties will be equitable, respectful, and ongoing.
- the Self-Determination Fund: resourcing pool to allow equity for Traditional Owners in negotiating Treaty.

While the Assembly made great strides in ensuring the future success of Treaty for all, we also had ample opportunity to celebrate with

Treaty Day Out on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country). The festival held in Bendigo brought together 3000 people for a deadly lineup of First Nations artists and a special performance by the Wulumbarra dancers.

April-June saw the elections held for the Assembly to determine who will represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians in the negotiations of Statewide Treaty during its second term.

DJAARA, through a member-vote election process, welcomed our member Djaran Murray-Jackson into the Dja Dja Wurrung Reserved Seat role.

This brings DJAARA to an exciting time. Our work in Treaty continues to focus on allowing our community to voice their goals and aspirations, and understand their rights, as we head towards negotiation.

## THE FIRST PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY AND TREATY

The First People's Assembly of Victoria (FPAV) is made up of 31 members who are all proud Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria.

Dja Dja Wurrung have a represented seat on the Assembly, Djaran Murray-Jackson

Actual Treaty negotiations haven't started yet. When Treaty is negotiated, there will be a State-wide Treaty as well as separate Treaties negotiated with Traditional Owner groups. Each group would have their own Treaty and also be covered by the State-wide Treaty.

A Self-Determination fund will be established to benefit all First Peoples in Victoria during the Treaty negotiation process and beyond. The fund will be controlled by First Peoples and be used to:

- make sure First Peoples are on equal footing with the State Government in Treaty negotiations
- support First Peoples to build capacity, wealth and prosperity for current and future generations.

Into the future, the ultimate goal is for the Assembly to be empowered to make laws, consult with Victorian Parliament and control the administration of Aboriginal Affairs.

What Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People have asked for is to have Aboriginal People looking after Aboriginal People. We are hoping for an Aboriginal Parliament that will sit beside the Victorian Parliament.



## TREATY DAY OUT

More than 2000 people attended Bendigo's Treaty Day Out in October. It was a great event for community to come together on Country.

DJAARA chair and Dja Dja Wurrung Reserved seat holder Trent Nelson performed the smoking ceremony, while Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Rodney Carter welcomed everybody to Country.

The Wulumbarra dancers performed the Barramul (Emu) dance. Several Dja Dja Wurrung businesses also had stalls on the day.

Members gathered on the morning of Treaty Day Out to hear what has been happening in the Treaty space with Trent Nelson, Dja Dja Wurrung Representative on the First Peoples' Assembly, along with First People's Assembly North West Engagement Project Officers Jordan Knight and Calinda Egan.

Members shared their thoughts on Treaty, including the importance of involving our youth in these processes as our future generation.

DJAARA staff have also been talking Treaty with Jordan recently. Conversations have included the now legislated Treaty Authority, the Treaty Negotiation Framework and the Self Determination fund.



# Bayikina Dja Dja Wurrung Language

The bayikina (reawakening) of Dja Dja Wurrung language is essential to the cultural foundation of Dja Dja Wurrung People and the Dja Dja Wurrung Group. This document provides a continuation of this practice.

For many generations, Dja Dja Wurrung Ancestors have communicated and shared their languages with clans and other language groups who travel long distances for ceremony, trade, hunting, fishing, and gathering.

Stories from the mission period recount our Old People being punished for using Dja Dja Wurrung language and customs in their everyday life. Through the years, Dja Dja Wurrung language, words, and traditions have survived through Dja Dja Wurrung People's dynamic and determined connection to Culture and Country.

Over the years, our language reawakening has become an extension and continuation of our oral history practices and traditional practice of sharing knowledge with our People and those that reside in Central Victoria. We share our language to ensure it remains in the landscape it belongs.

Today, Dja Dja Wurrung language is present and used daily. There are a few People who know Dja Dja Wurrung a lot, and there are those who are still learning. It does not matter whether someone is proficient or many People who are just learning, as long as it is spoken it is still an oral language.

We continue to find ways to continue speaking, hearing, seeing, and knowing our language across Djandak.



Language in the Quarry Hill Primary School bush garden.



Dja Dja Wurrung language embedded at Galkangu – Bendigo GovHub.



DJALI BALAK

(tongue/language, mob/People/group)

Our language subcommittee of the DJAARA Board, reviews language requests, provides advice and approves pronunciation of new researched words.

DJAARA’s Language Repatriation Team meets monthly with Djali Balak and provides administrative support.

The team received 125 language requests this year. The language database now contains 715 Dja Dja Wurrung words.

We are grateful to Dja Dja Wurrung members of Djali Balak for volunteering their time.

LANGUAGE CONTINUES TO GROW

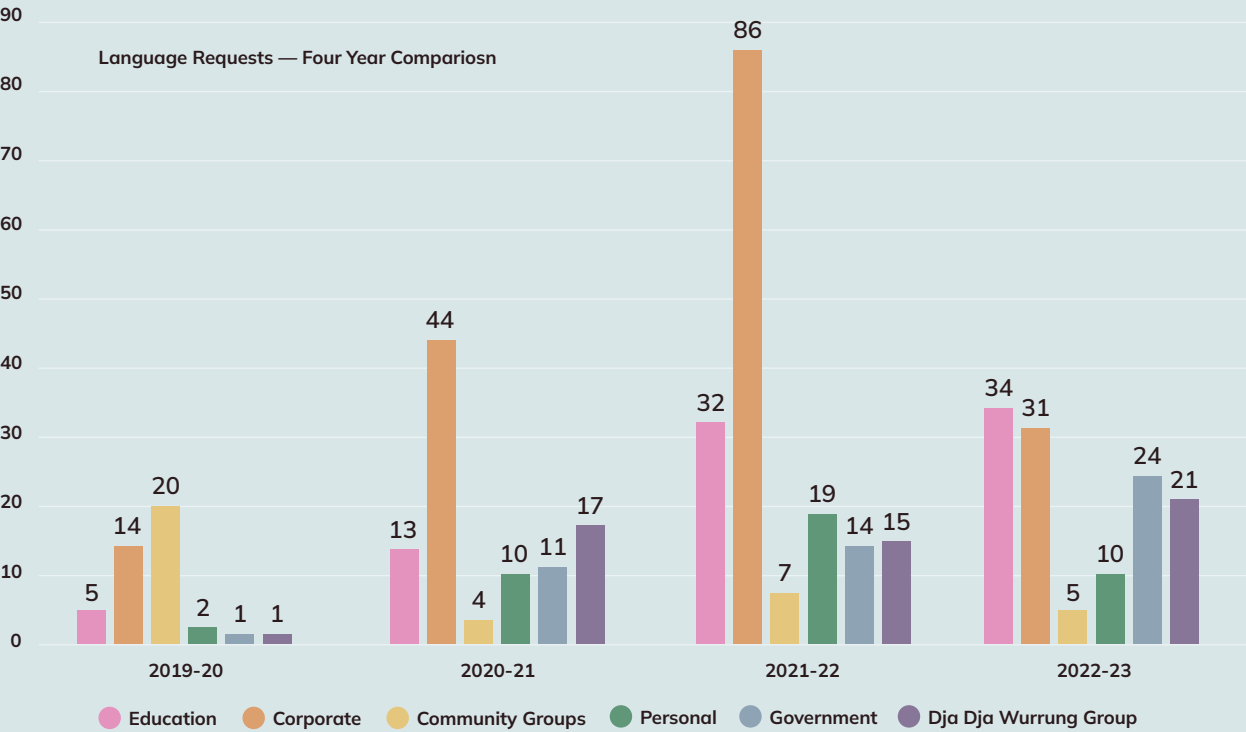
Our records about who is requesting use of language, and where, show a significant growth in the use of Dja Dja Wurrung language in mainstream across the Dja Dja Wurrung Group and in the mainstream community.

We receive new and regular requests from educational institutions, community groups, corporate businesses, government, and individuals applying to use Dja Dja Wurrung Language for their workspaces, community spaces and private homes.

The following graphs and tables illustrate the breadth and the growth of language requests.

YEAR	REQUESTS
2019-2020	41
2020-2021	71
2021-22	143
2022-23	125

Language Requests — Over Time



City of Greater Bendigo	76
Hepburn Shire Council	15
Mount Alexander Shire Council	15
Loddon Shire Council	6
Buloke Shire Council	3
Northern Grampians Shire Council	1
Central Goldfields Shire Council	5
Macedon Rangers Shire Council	2
Ballarat City Council	0
Campaspe Shire Council	1
Pyrenees Shire Council	1

Language Requests — by Local Government Area 2022–23



Gurruk Sign at Annie Galvin Early Learning Centre.

Naming of Building (govt)	2
Naming of Building (Company)	1
Naming of Building (Private)	8
Naming of Building (Community)	2
Name of group or club	22
Word/s on printed material i.e., annual report	38
Story	1
Other:	51

Use of Requested Language 2022–23



Banya sign at Annie Galvin Early Learning Centre.



# Malamiya | Cultural Heritage

The Malamiya (Cultural Heritage) Team focuses on protecting heritage places, increasing our knowledge, and repatriating Ancestral remains and heritage materials.

The team also coordinates ceremonial events such as Smoking Ceremonies and Welcomes to Country, which support and promote Dja Dja Wurrung cultural practices.

Our work is closely tied to goals 2 and 3 in Dhelkunya Dja, the Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan: Cultural Practices and Customs and Cultural Heritage.

The team has grown this year, with the appointment of a Project Coordinator to manage a Strategic Heritage Assessment Project, and a Government Heritage Liaison Officer (GHLO) to support engagement with government on planning and heritage matters, including relating to Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) statutory functions. It's notable that DJAARA is the first RAP to appoint a GHLO. Both roles were funded by First Peoples – State Relations (FP–SR).

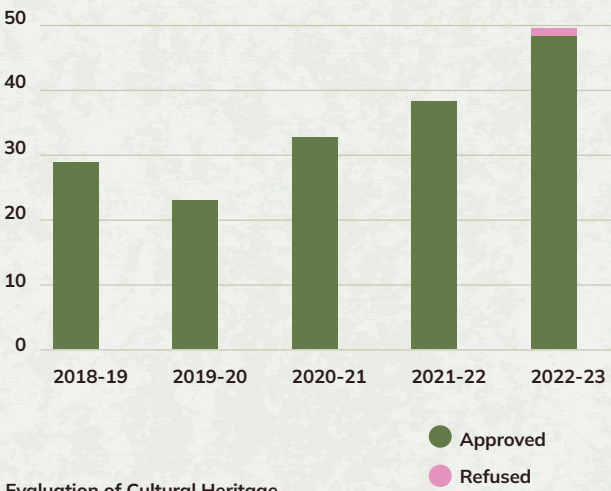
## STATUTORY FUNCTIONS

A large part of our work is advancing the protection of Dja Dja Wurrung Cultural Heritage by way of the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic). This work includes:

- involvement in Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) – we consult with the sponsors of development works on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country), negotiating conditions under which they can carry out their projects to minimise the risks to heritage. We also evaluate their management plans and either approve or refuse them based on their compliance with the Act.
- issuing Cultural Heritage Permits – The Act gives us authority to issue Cultural Heritage Permits for a range of activities such as research, moving artefacts off Djandak, selling artefacts, harming heritage, and carrying out excavation to locate cultural heritage. Through the permit we can impose conditions on the way in which the activity is carried out.
- carrying out compliance inspections – both for work being carried out as part of permits and management plans, and to identify and report any breaches of the Act that occur on Djandak.

## CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLANS

During the last year the team evaluated 49 CHMPs. This represents an increase of roughly 25 per cent over the previous year and is the greatest number of CHMPs we have evaluated in a year. We also refused one CHMP for not meeting the requirements of the Act.



Evaluation of Cultural Heritage

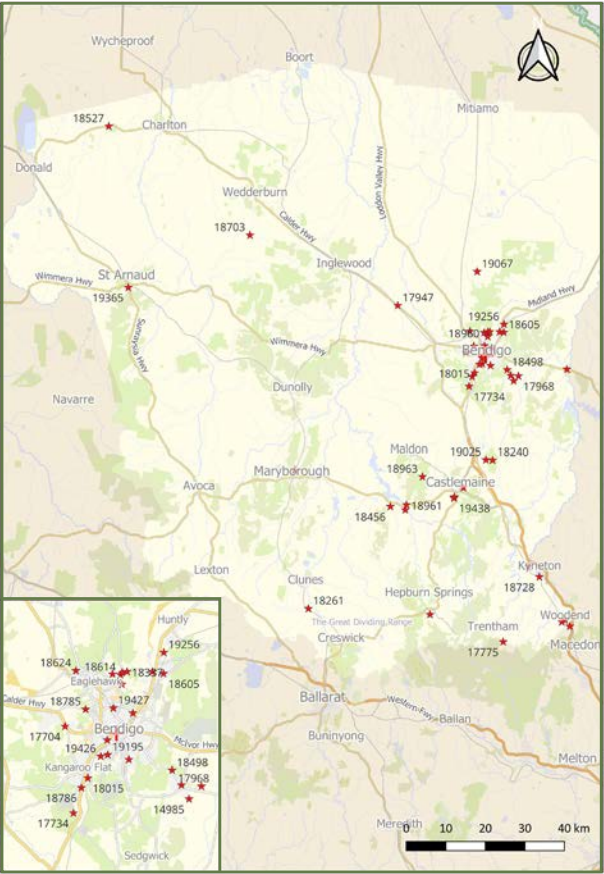
Cultural Heritage Management Plans Approved for Financial Year 2022-23	
14985	Sewer and Drainage Works, Emu Creek Road Strathfieldsaye (Amendment)
16366	Bottling and Brewery Development, Lot 1, Wittingslow Lane, Kyneton (Amendment)
17704	Coliban Water Mains Delivery, Maiden Gully
17734	Bendigo Camping Village, Kangaroo Flat
17775	Trentham Water Treatment Plant Upgrade
17947	Calder Highway Safety Works, Marong to Wedderburn
17968	Residential Development, 53 Dukes Lane, Strathfieldsaye
18015	23-25 Chapel Street Kangaroo Flat Subdivision (Amendment)
18240	Optus Optic Fibre Cable at Mt Alexander
18261	Maryborough signalling, Tourello passing loop and Emu passing loop

18298	28 Howard Street Epsom
18456	Newstead Solar Farm
18498	Djandak - Wildflower Drive, Bendigo
18527	Upgrade to Facilities and Proposed Utility installation: Wooroonook Lake Camping Ground
18605	Residential Development: 62 Howard Street, Ascot
18614	213-221 Jobs Gully Road Eaglehawk
18624	Proposed Subdivision at 3-9 Coakes Street, Sailors Gully, VIC 3556
18652	Kalimna Park, Castlemaine
18685	Subdivision: 1 Mitchell Street, Axedale
18703	54 Bretts Road Kurraca Victoria 3518 Proposed Eucalyptus Distillation Plant
18728	Kyneton Station Carpark Extension
18785	280 Maiden Gully Road, Maiden Gully 3551



18786	272 High Street, Kangaroo Flat
18841	Proposed Dwellings at 853 Strathfieldsaye Rd Strathfieldsaye
18847	Proposed Residential Subdivision at 13 Nash Lane, Daylesford
18868	Bendigo Creek In Stream Works
18908	4-6 Tullaroop Road, Maryborough
18960	142-144 Simpsons Road, Eaglehawk
18961	Nos. 11, 11A and 11B Codrington Street, Newstead
18962	4 Brandt Street, Newstead
18999	Subdivision 8-10 Mahoneys Road, Woodend
19025	Harcourt Oak Forest Landscape works
19049	Woodend Community Centre, 117 High Street Woodend
19067	Proposed timber manufacturing development: 13 Whewell Street, Neilborough
19184	Residential Subdivision: 320 Howard Street Eaglehawk
19196	Flora Hill Athletes Village
19256	Proposed Drainage Outfall Jones Road Epsom

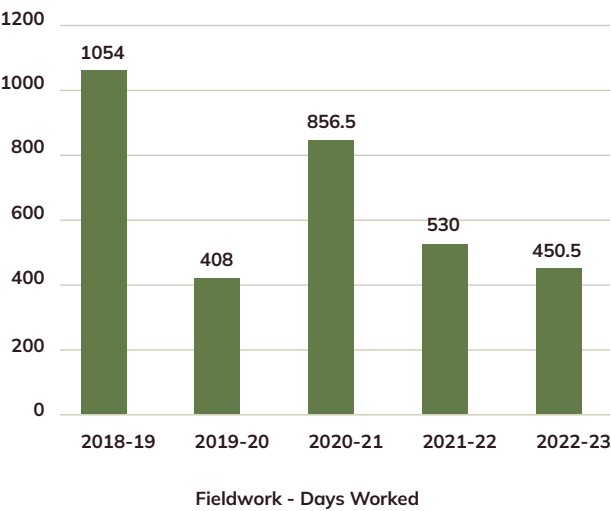
19336	Proposed Subdivision and Dwellings at 59-61, 63 &67 Lily St & 60-62 Thistle St, Bendigo
19365	St Arnaud Standpipe, St Arnaud
19426	Dja Dja Wurrung Corporate and Community Centre, 41-73 Hattam Street Golden Square
19427	Bendigo Showgrounds CHMP
19438	Campbells Creek Off-Road Trail Project, Castlemaine
19515	42 Torrens Street, Marong



Location of Cultural Heritage Management Plan Activities.

CULTURAL HERITAGE FIELD WORK

While the volume of CHMPs has increased, the number of days worked by the casual fieldwork team has decreased. This is largely a reflection of major projects. Many days were worked in previous years on the Southwest Loddon Pipeline in 2018-19, and the Mitiamo Stock Pipeline, the Kyneton Hospital Salvage project and the Western Renewables Link project in 2020-21. While the Western Renewables Link project is continuing, ongoing access problems and other opposition to the project has meant that the amount of fieldwork over the past 12 months has been reduced.



CEREMONIES

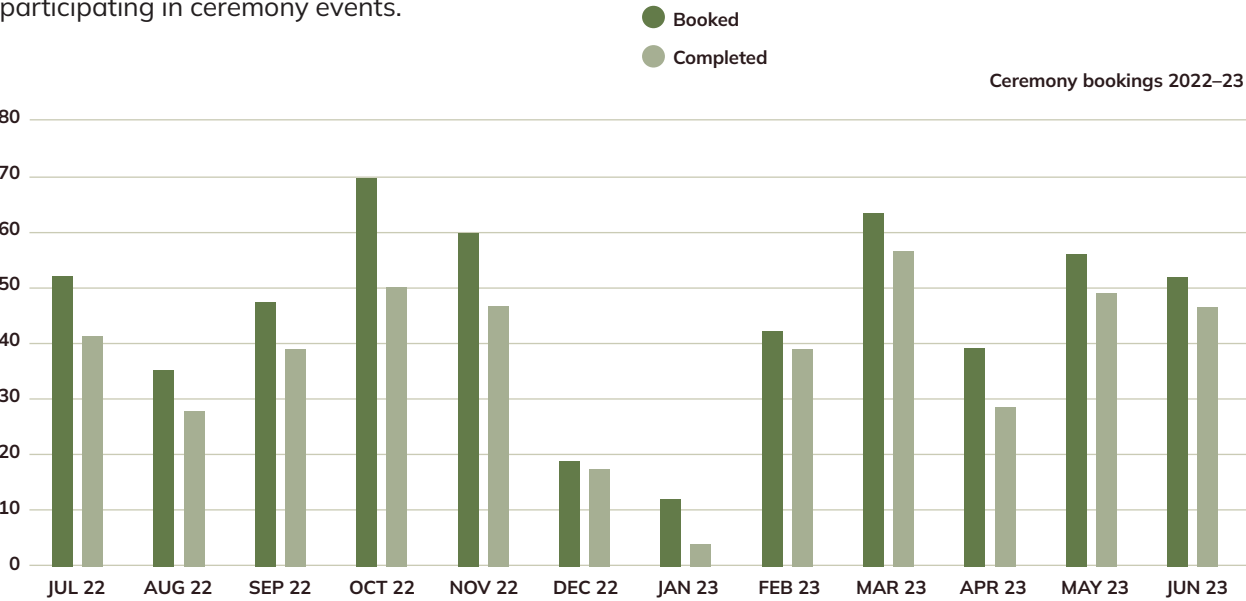
Over the last year the Cultural Heritage team booked 546 ceremonies (Welcomes to Country, Smoking ceremonies, and other performances). Of these 444 (81%) were completed. The remainder did not eventuate, either through cancellation on the part of the client, or lack of resources to fulfil the booking.

At times the number of booking requests exceeds the capacity of our roster. This is typical during NAIDOC week and similar events. As a result, we have limited the numbers of bookings we accept in any month. This limit reflects the number of people on the ceremonies roster. We are always happy to talk to members interested in participating in ceremony events.

COMPLIANCE

The team’s two Aboriginal Heritage Officers (AHOs) carried out 81 CHMP compliance inspections and identified six breaches of CHMP conditions, five being failure to have a copy of the CHMP on the work site. The other breach was works commencing before a Cultural Heritage induction. In two cases the breach was self-reported.

The AHOs made four reports of non-compliance to FP–SR and assisted FP–SR in investigating a report of harm to Cultural Heritage. The investigation revealed no harm had occurred.







Dja Dja Wurrung timber artefacts held by the Bristol Museum: a parrying shield, above, and a leangle (a type of club weapon), inset.



# Bristol Museum Artefact Repatriation

Since mid-2019 the Malamiya team has been engaged in discussions with the Australian Institute of Aboriginal & Torres Straits Islander Studies (AIATSIS) around the collection of Aboriginal cultural heritage held by the Bristol Museum in the United Kingdom.

This collection, dating from the early to mid-nineteenth century consists of 15 wooden artefacts, some of which were labelled as originating from “the Loddon Tribe”.

Since April the Malamiya team and DJAARA Members have met with AIATSIS to establish, firstly, that the items were Dja Dja Wurrung, and secondly, the significance of these objects to Dja Dja Wurrung People and the need to repatriate them.

In December, the DJAARA Board, agreed that the Corporation would formally request the return of the complete collection held by the Bristol Museum. Discussions with AIATSIS around approaching the Museum are ongoing.

## CULTURAL MAPPING STRATEGIC ABORIGINAL HERITAGE ASSESSMENT PROJECT

DJAARA began a cultural mapping project in March that will provide high-level mapping of areas of cultural importance across Djandak.

The object is to inform long-term planning strategies to ensure protection of Aboriginal places, as well as increasing our knowledge of country. The project is funded by First Peoples – State Relations.

During the desktop stage, the DJAARA SAHA project interrogated a range of archival and primary sources to establish a list of culturally important landscapes.

The image below shows an 1854 map of Lar-ne-barramul and the Franklinford Aboriginal Station, an 1840 letter from Assistant Protector Edward Stone Parker regarding the selection of the Franklinford Protectorate station and an 1850s photograph of Aboriginal people and their huts at the Mount Franklin farm. Source: SLV, PROV.

References:

Fraser, H. 1854, Plan of a Part of the Aboriginal Station in the County of Talbot, VPRS 8168/P0002, LODDON88, Historic Plan Collection, Public Records Office Victoria.

Daintree, R. and A. Fauchery, [c.1858], [Aboriginals' farm near Mount Franklin], State Library of Victoria.

Parker E. 1840, Letter to Robinson 'Proposing the establishment of an Aboriginal reserve in a central location on the Loddon River', VPRS 11/P0000, 119, Public Records Office Victoria.



A collage of primary sources relating to Lar-ne-barramul and the Loddon Protectorate precinct. Source: SLV and PROV.



CENTRAL GOLDFIELDS WORLD HERITAGE BID

The Malamiya team are developing DJAARA’s contribution to the masterplan for the Central Victorian Goldfields bid for World Heritage Listing, in collaboration with a Wartaka (Dja Dja Wurrung knowledge group). Dja Dja Wurrung stories and perspectives of the goldfields will be documented to position Dja Dja Wurrung Culture, values and knowledge within the historical and geographical context.

The team will also review the masterplan, which will support the UNESCO World Heritage nomination by identifying the protection and sustainable use of the Central Victorian Goldfields for the benefit of tourism and local communities.

WOMBAT STATE FOREST RECOVERY PROJECT

Team members worked with VicForests during the storm recovery operation in the Wombat Forest to monitor operations and assist with integrating Dja Dja Wurrung rights and cultural values into the agency’s operating procedures.

Previously unrecorded culturally scarred trees, rock wells and grinding grooves were identified through assessments in VicForests works areas before and after the storm recovery operation. Some trees were also identified as potential occupation trees.

Read more about the Wombat Forest recovery works on p 72.

CROWN WATER FRONTAGE ASSESSMENT

The Malamiya team assessed 97 parcels of land along waterways on Djandak between May and December 2022 following the Victorian Government announcement about the opening of recreational camping on Crown land water frontages.

The team assessed cultural values and identified cultural material present at the sites. Of the parcels assessed, 15 were vetoed by the team.

In early 2023 DJAARA entered into an agreement with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to monitor the camping areas for compliance, which will run to late 2024.

LOOKING FOR CULTURAL HERITAGE

The Malamiya Team has recorded multiple new Cultural Heritage sites across Djandak including scarred trees, occupation trees, cultural sites, scatters, rock wells and rock art. These have been identified following many site assessments carried out in response to enquiries/reports from the community and government agencies. The new sites will be submitted to First Peoples – State Relations for registration and will be protected by the Aboriginal Heritage Act.

Several new rock art sites were recorded across Djandak through the team’s preliminary assessments in collaboration with Parks Victoria and rock art specialist Ben Gunn in late June. Following the success of this project, further collaboration is being discussed.

The team visited the Franklinford School site in November 2022 to look for the remains of the school buildings. No remains of the school building were found on site. However, a semi-circular arrangement of volcanic stones toward the front of the block may be associated with a dwelling. Further research has suggested a likely location; this will require further investigation in the future.

DJAARA assists with flood clean-up on Country

In October, the Malamiya team saw an opportunity to help with flood recovery in Rochester. Their proposal to help was immediately supported by DJAARA senior management.

At the local hospital, after a crash course in removing sodden carpet, the team joined other enthusiastic volunteers, using nothing more than blunt blades, two shovels and brute force.

At St Joseph’s Primary School, Malamiya team members helped move saved items to the gymnasium for sorting.



The team wrestled rolls of heavy wet carpet like it was an Olympic sport. Getting slapped in the face with wet carpet, ice skating on carpet glue and dragging kilos of wet carpet to the dumpster didn’t deter them as they ripped up carpet like there was a prize underneath.

As the team drove back to Bendigo, thoughts lingered on the devastation, the community spirit, strangers helping strangers, and the smiles and thanks from those who had lost so much. This is a beautiful and resilient community on Country.





# Dja Dja Wurrung in the spotlight

Dja Dja Wurrung history and Culture opens ‘The Trentham District Story’, a series of signs about the history of the Trentham district, which were launched by the Trentham and District Historical Society outside the society’s museum on Camp Street Trentham in March.

Dja Dja Wurrung Elder, Uncle Rick Nelson worked with DJAARA staff members Hannah Webster, Harley Dunolly-Lee, Harley Douglas, Caleb Dunolly-Lee and Oli Moraes to develop content for the Dja Dja Wurrung sign, which appears first in the series.

The sign proudly puts Dja Dja Wurrung People back in the landscape. It will enable the wider community to understand and appreciate more about Djandak and Dja Dja Wurrung People, through stories of traditional Culture, historical events and people, and contemporary Dja Dja Wurrung activity on Djandak.

While he could not attend the launch, Uncle Rick said he would like to see further work with local communities to increase awareness through initiatives like interpretive signage and Cultural tourism.

Djaara man Jason Kerr, who performed the smoking and Welcome ceremonies, highlighted the importance of partnering with Traditional Owners.

“Although there are many, many stories to tell of Dja Dja Wurrung people in the early stages of occupation, it is good to highlight some of the people who shone with extraordinary kindness and unbiased actions in helping the European settlers. These signs show a glimpse of those histories that need to be told.

Uncle Rick Nelson  
Dja Dja Wurrung Elder

“Having non-Aboriginal communities knowing the history around this part of Dja Dja Wurrung Country is really significant.”  
Jason Kerr  
Dja Dja Wurrung Man

He emphasized the significance of non-Aboriginal communities knowing the history around this part of Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

It’s important to have the story of our First Nations People along with the stories of the early white settlers, so non-Aboriginal people understand more about how our People survived, what our Ancestors went through, Jason explained.

DJAARA’s Hannah Webster, who worked with Uncle Rick on the project, said that Australian histories have ignored, misunderstood, and treated with contempt the histories of First Nations people for too long.



Hannah Webster (left) and Jason Kerr with the opening sign (further signs in background).



Reverse side of the sign, featuring Djaara man Birn Burman.

“Projects like this are key to increasing community understanding of Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owners and the true shared history. This sign properly recognises Dja Dja Wurrung as the Traditional Owners of this unceded land.”  
Hannah Webster  
DJAARA Team Member

While a lot has been achieved, there is still a long way to go.

Dja Dja Wurrung inclusion in the Trentham District Story was facilitated by DJAARA Executive Team Manager Jim Brooks, who saw the need and an opportunity, engaged with the Trentham Historical Society and supported DJAARA input.



# Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu | Our Recognition and Settlement Agreement Implementation team

The Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) with the State of Victoria, signed on 28 March 2013, is a means by which Dja Dja Wurrung Culture, traditional practices, and the unique relationship we have to Djandak are recognised, strengthened, protected, and promoted for the benefit of all Victorians, now and into the future.



***This historic agreement will bring Dja Dja Wurrung People back into the landscape. We will no longer be invisible.***

***We will have the right to access our traditional lands for hunting and ceremonial purposes enabling us to keep our Culture alive and strengthen our connection to our traditional lands and waters.***

Uncle Graham Atkinson, Elder  
& DDWCAC Chairperson 2004 -2014.

The RSA allows for continued recognition, through protocols, acknowledgements and Welcomes to Country, and signage on Djandak.

It also provides us with legal rights to practice Culture, access, and use our land and resources, and to have a say in what happens on our Country. The RSA gives us Aboriginal title of some of our traditional lands, including the right to actively manage Country.

The RSA also includes a Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA). The LUAA recognises Djaara rights and establishes protocols for activities proposed on “public land” across Djandak.

Our RSA is important for Dja Dja Wurrung self-determination as we continue to build up the structures and processes that will enable us to make the most of our rights and our recognition.

## UPHOLDING DJAARA RIGHTS

The Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu team, whose name means “we say yes to each other” (saying yes to each other is a metaphoric expression for a reached agreement), is responsible for implementing the Recognition and Settlement Agreement and has a number of functions including making sure Djaara rights are upheld when activities take place on Djandak.

The Team does this by:

- building and maintaining strong relationships with land managers and people who undertake activities
- reviewing notifications for proposed works and events
- providing recommendations and placing conditions on the way activities are carried out to avoid or minimise impacts on Cultural Heritage and Djaara rights
- negotiating community benefits for Dja Dja Wurrung People where an activity will impact on Djaara rights.

The work they achieve is present in many projects across the Group. They include but are not limited to:

- our Corporate and Community Centre – through the handing back of land to DJAARA, we now have an additional parcel of land to add to our RSA
- the Yilingga Marna Agreement with the City of Greater Bendigo. Read about Yilingga Marna on pp 26-29
- Dja Dja Wurrung signage in the Historical Society project in Trentham
- LUAA-focused inclusion in decision making via The Loddon Mallee Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee (RAJAC) and the Local Aboriginal Justice Action Committee (LAJAC).

Some more examples of outcomes achieved through negotiations for land use activities can be seen below.



CRESWICK TRAILS PROJECT

An agreement has been reached with the Hepburn Shire Council in relation to its Creswick Trails project which includes approximately 50km of new mountain bike trails and the upgrade of 11km of existing trails. This agreement involved some excellent non-monetary outcomes which recognise Dja Dja Wurrung and enhance user experience, including:

- developing three employment positions at the Council for Dja Dja Wurrung People
- cultural awareness training for Council staff delivered by DJAARA
- Dja Dja Wurrung language naming of at least 50% of the trails
- engaging DJANDAK to design, manufacture and install interpretive signage.

DONALD MEMORIAL PARK

DJAARA has reached an agreement with the Buloke Shire Council in relation to its upgrading of the Donald Memorial Park and Play Space. Outcomes include, among other things, the commissioning of a Dja Dja Wurrung artist for a mural in Donald and cultural competency training for Council staff to be provided by DUMAWUL.

WALSH COURT MARYBOROUGH

The Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu team was able to negotiate community benefits around the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) construction of a new vehicle depot, workshop and administration building in Maryborough. The team negotiated the following community benefits:

- DEECA will include Dja Dja Wurrung language names at the site
- DEECA will engage DUMAWUL to commission a piece of work by a Dja Dja Wurrung artist to be displayed in a prominent position at the site.

LICENCES

In April two part-time Compliance Officers joined the Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu team. Their primary role is to ensure that holders of resource industry licences within the Dja Dja Wurrung area are aware of their obligations under Schedule 4 of the Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA).

The Compliance Officers are seeking to build good relationships with the resources sector, and we are pleased to see the responsiveness displayed by explorers and miners.

They have developed a strong relationship with Earth Resources Regulation and, in particular, the Native Title Team within DEECA. The teams are working together to create more effective and streamlined processes that support industry compliance with the LUAA.

Team Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu will host a conference for miners and explorers in the forthcoming year, the first of its kind to be run by DJAARA. It will explain to industry their rights and obligations under the RSA. We aim to develop good relations with industry so projects such as mine site rehabilitation can be achieved, and long-term disturbed country can be healed in cooperative ventures between miners and Traditional Owners.

INITIAL OUTCOMES REVIEW - RECOGNITION & SETTLEMENT AGREEMENT

DJAARA on behalf of the Dja Dja Wurrung People entered into a new Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) on 26 October 2022. This marked the conclusion of the Initial Outcomes Review that commenced in 2018.

The new RSA includes an annual target of 10% for state government in natural resource management procurement. It also includes additional rights for Dja Dja Wurrung People to take and use natural resources. Members can reach out to their Family Group director or email luaa@djadjawurrung.com.au for further information. The Dja Dja Wurrung Group are currently creating clips for Members which explain their new rights under the Natural Resources Agreement.

PERIODIC REVIEW

DJAARA's Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State is to be reviewed within 5 years of the completion of the Initial Outcomes Review, as per clause 11.3 RSA Volume 1. In January 2023, DJAARA commenced work on the new RSA Renegotiation by putting out an expression of interest to Members for an RSA Renegotiation Wartaka (Dja Dja Wurrung knowledge group). The RSA Renegotiation Wartaka has been providing detailed and thoughtful guidance to Team Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu.

TIMBER CREEK IMPLEMENTATION

We continue to see an increase in acknowledgement that the Timber Creek decision applies as a standard to compensating Dja Dja Wurrung People for an impact on their rights in land. We look forward to continuing to work with state and local government to see this important decision implemented in full.

Developing Djaara staff capacity

During the past year, Djaara man and Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu Project Officer Dylan Brown began a transformative voyage within DJAARA.

He began and completed a traineeship, obtaining a Certificate 3 in Business. In addition to his work commitments at DJAARA, Dylan is now pursuing a degree in law at Victoria University, which will enable him to contribute to DJAARA's mission even more effectively.

Fostering and maintaining positive relationships with collaborators has been one of Dylan's primary responsibilities at DJAARA. This effort is crucial to guaranteeing that Djaara rights are not only acknowledged but also respected.

Dylan has devoted himself to establishing and cultivating these partnerships, with an emphasis on open communication, collaboration, and a shared dedication to achieving common objectives. These connections have played a crucial role in advancing the cause and safeguarding the protection of Djaara rights.



# Partnerships and Policy

Healing Djandak (Dja Wurrung Country) and healing Dja Dja Wurrung People is at the centre of the Partnership and Policy Program's work, where our focus is to turn Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan Goals into meaningful actions on the ground.

We do our best to ensure Dja Dja Wurrung People are engaged in the design, development and delivery of this important work.

The Partnerships and Policy Programs delivered our work through:

- developing formal partnerships and agreements with other entities about how they are going to respect, recognise and enable Dja Dja Wurrung People's rights and cultural obligations
- developing DJAARA policy positions and strategies, and associated implementation plans
- strategically planning and coordinating the delivery of programs of work such as Galkangu (Joint Management) and Djandak Wi (Country fire).

This year has been one of enormous pride and unprecedented output for the teams within the Partnerships and Policy Programs area, with the following highlights:

- Planning, preparing for and delivering more Djandak Wi burns than ever before.
- Delivering more works in the Joint-Managed parks than ever before, including long-awaited signage and visitor amenities.
- Developing strategic plans that articulate DJAARA's position and plan of action for critical areas of action:
  - Galk-galk Dhelkunya – Forest Gardening
  - Nyauwi Mutjeka – Renewable Energy
  - Climate Change
  - Djandak Wi (Country fire) – in development

We have also undertaken important work to influence State Government policy and legislation, and begun a number of Nation Building projects, including the review and refresh of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan.

The highlights of this work are summarised in the following sections.

## Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan - guiding the work of Partnerships and Policy

The Partnerships and Policy Team facilitates outcomes across the entire Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan. The team's work is most closely aligned with the following outcomes for Dja Dja Wurrung People:

- The full range of rights and interests are legally recognised and reflected in government policies.
- Traditional knowledge is consolidated and protected. It is used to guide cultural practices and the way Djandak is managed.
- Re-built capacity to care for Djandak.
- Involvement in the design and implementation of remediation works and restoration initiatives in upside-down Country.
- A strong, well-governed corporation that effectively represents the interests of Dja Dja Wurrung People.

And through Joint Management:

- Diverse opportunities for involvement in delivering land, water and natural and cultural resource management, at all levels.
- Real sharing of power and responsibility, which requires trust and support from existing land managers.
- Existing governance structures and processes, which have historically excluded and marginalised us are de-colonised and transformed to be culturally appropriate and reflect true sharing and partnership.





# Our Forest Gardening Strategy to heal Country

DJAARA launched its anticipated Forest Gardening strategy Galk-galk Dhelkunya (to care for/to heal, many trees) 2022-2034 in December.

Our CEO Rodney Carter called on the state government to reform the regulatory framework around the management of Djandak so it is empowering and enabling for First Nations People. He said it is essential that Dja Dja Wurrung People are supported to manage Country and apply their principles of **Galk-galk Dhelkunya**.

**Galk-galk Dhelkunya** represents Dja Dja Wurrung People's holistic philosophy and practices for healing Country and People.



*For two centuries the forests have lost Traditional Owner specialist knowledge and hands-on tending. Today is the start of nurturing Country.*

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

It's a contemporary approach to caring for Country that is deeply rooted in traditional knowledge and practice.

The term "Forest Gardening" communicates how Dja Dja Wurrung People interact with the environment. Galk-galk Dhelkunya empowers



Our CEO Rodney Carter and Chair Trent Nelson at the launch of Galk-galk Dhelkunya, our Forest Gardening strategy.

DJAARA and others to heal Country, heal Dja Dja Wurrung People, and improve the economic health of local communities.

DJAARA has developed a five-year business case and is looking to establish partnerships with organisations working in land management.

DJAARA's Dhelkunya Dja (Healing Country) Policy Team led the development of the strategy, in consultation with DJAARA Members, and land management practitioners.

Traditional Owner Engagement Officer and strategy co-contributor Jacinta Douglas reflected on the process in her speech at the launch.



*The Forest Gardening Strategy is not only a statement of Djaara's methods of caring for Country, but also a translation piece, to articulate the Dja Dja Wurrung way of being and knowing as handed down to us by our Ancestors.*

Jacinta Douglas  
Traditional Owner Engagement Officer

She described the challenge of articulating how important it is for the Dja Dja Wurrung community to be on Country and heal the landscape with traditional knowledge and practices.

Looking for guidance, Jacinta sought advice from the Members providing input into the strategy. She recalls that, with kindness and wisdom, they explained that this difficulty comes about because we are not using our own language.



*It clicked to me that Western ways of being and knowing are simply unable to comprehend the vast, inherent, ancestral connection that we as Traditional Owners have to our lands.*

Jacinta Douglas  
Traditional Owner Engagement Officer

## GALK-GALK DHELKUNYA — FOREST GARDENING STRATEGY



Our CEO Rodney Carter, Traditional Owner Engagement Officer and strategy co-contributor Jacinta Douglas, University of Melbourne School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences and Forestry Australia Victorian Branch Chair Professor Rodney Keenan, and our Board Chair Trent Nelson.



See the Official Galk-galk Dhelkunya Launch here



## IMPLEMENTING GALK-GALK DHELKUNYA (FOREST GARDENING) ACROSS COUNTRY

The Forest Gardening team has developed comprehensive proposals and plans to implement forest gardening practices and activities to demonstrate Dja Dja Wurrung People's cultural landscape management.

### TOBIN TRACK

DJAARA proposes to establish cultural thinning plots within this 14-hectare block of wet sclerophyll forest in the Wombat State Forest in Leonards Hill. This will allow culturally important grasses and groundcover plants to return, which can carry cultural fire in future seasons.

The team has worked with University of Melbourne scientists to develop an ecological assessment and monitoring framework that enables DJAARA to demonstrate the benefits of Galk-galk Dhelkunya for Country and people. The project has included multiple days for Members and Group staff to learn, participate and contribute towards the vision for the site.



Pete McCurley, DJAARA Timbers Project Manager at Tobin track.



## Wombat Forest Recovery Works

The work of healing Country is interrelated: teams from across the Corporation are working together to bring the Wombat Forest back to health.

The Forest Gardening and Djandak Wi teams have worked closely to develop a comprehensive plan to restore and the health of Country at Babbingtons Hill, Wombat Forest, following the storm damage in 2021, the subsequent timber salvage operation carried out by VicForests, and the longer-term impacts of mining and mismanagement of the forest.

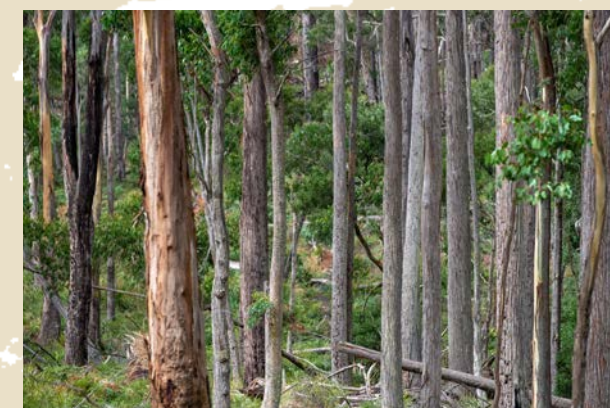
The team is working with partners to develop a comprehensive restoration and management plan for the site which could include cultural

thinning, cultural heritage protections, track remediation, and the revegetation of culturally important plants.

The Djandak Wi team is collaborating with DEECA Midlands district to bring cultural fire to a 30ha area in autumn 2024.

As part of this work the Forest Gardening team has been working closely with the Cultural Heritage team in identifying a range of Cultural Heritage, cultural values and culturally significant sites at Babbingtons.

Read more about the Cultural Heritage team's involvement on p 60.



The Forest Gardening and Djandak Wi teams are working closely to develop a comprehensive plan to restore the health of Country at Babbingtons Hill, Wombat Forest.

Groundcover plants returning to Country following the storm.





## COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Since launching the Forest Gardening Strategy DJAARA have been meeting with Dja Dja Wurrung Members, community groups, environmentalists, and the broader public on-Country to share the vision for Galk-galk Dhelkunya and how we can walk together with others to heal Country.

This has involved on-Country yarns, walks, online presentations, and community forums. DJAARA will continue engaging, listening, and walking with others as we implement the Strategy over the next 10 years.



The Forest Gardening team led a group of CFA, DEECA and local government staff on a tour of forest gardening trial sites and storm recovery areas in April.

## HEALTHY COUNTRY MEMBERS DAY FEBRUARY 2023

Input from DJAARA Members is helping to guide planning for forest restoration. Through a partnership with the Indigenous Knowledge Institute at Melbourne University, the Forest Gardening team co-designed an on-Country Day at Tobin Track in the Wombat Forest.

DJAARA Members shared their vision and aspirations for healing sick Country, including cultural thinning and cultural burning.

## GALK-GALK (DJAARA TIMBERS)

DJAARA Timbers is a pilot Dja Dja Wurrung sustainable timber business venture. Its focus is on finding opportunities for Dja Dja Wurrung People and the broader Aboriginal community to practice Culture, develop skills in Cultural craft and sustainable timber processing.

We also aim to provide timber for projects across the Dja Dja Wurrung Group including signage in parks, artistic installations, architectural timber, and furniture timbers for on-Country installation.

Since the Board endorsed the testing of Galk-galk by DJAARA in February, the team has received a grant from the Federal Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to purchase new and efficient machines, vehicles and equipment valued at \$1.44 million to upscale the testing of sustainable, high value and cultural timber products.

Inaugural DJAARA Timbers jobs included providing Blackwood logs to Uncle Rick Nelson for cultural use and a commercial order for Melbourne craftsman Damien Wright and Melbourne University milling a messmate stringybark tree from a private property on Djandak. The milled timber was used for an art installation that will hang from the roof in the new Indigenous Student Centre at the University in Melbourne.



# Djandak Wi

**Djandak Wi (Country fire) is making a resurgence on Djaara Country. Often referred to as ‘cultural burning’, Djandak Wi is cool, slow fire, that results in a patchy burn.**

Using the principle of ‘right fire, right time, right place’, it improves the health of Country and holds significant spiritual, social, and ceremonial importance for Dja Dja Wurrung People.

In some areas of sick Country that have not been actively managed for a long time, remedial treatments are needed first to support reset to cooler burning regimes.

Cultural burning stimulates native plant seeds to germinate, promoting biodiversity. It also helps manage fuel loads – that is surface and near surface fuels, such as in ecosystems choked with dense invasive weeds. Left untreated, these fuels can exacerbate fire intensity and risk during wildfire events.

After receiving funding through the Victorian Government’s Cultural Fire Grants Program in 2022, the Dja Dja Wurrung Group has been able to significantly expand the Djandak Wi program. This has included hiring more program staff in DJAARA, establishing a Forestry and Fire crew at DJANDAK, purchasing fire vehicles and equipment, and a range of other initiatives to put more healing fire back into Country.



In the past 12 months, DJAARA’s Djandak Wi program team has worked with DJANDAK’s Forestry and Fire team to deliver 24 days of burning across forest, woodland, wetland, and grassland ecosystems under DJAARA’s cultural burning program.

This is over three times more than we’ve achieved in any year since the program began in 2017, representing a more than threefold increase on previous years. DJAARA are the leaders in cultural burning delivery in Victoria.

Read more about the work of the Forestry and Fire Team on p 120.

For every burn ignition day, many more days of hard work are put in by staff employed in the program – walking Djandak to read indicators of readiness to burn, training, planning, site preparation, post burn patrolling, and bio-cultural monitoring and evaluation.

A focus of the program has been to provide further opportunities for broader DJAARA membership to participate in burns. An official Autumn 2023 burn season launch and cultural burn event for DJAARA Members and Dja Dja Wurrung Group staff was held at Yapenya in April.

A Wartaka (Dja Dja Wurrung knowledge group) was established to guide the development of the Djandak Wi Strategy, which is expected to be completed in late 2023.



# Djaara Women's Inspiring Journey on the Japan Knowledge Exchange Tour

In April 2023, two remarkable Djaara women, Sharlee Dunolly-Lee, and Jacinta Douglas, embarked on an extraordinary journey of knowledge exchange to Japan, organized by Global Landcare.

Their two-week adventure took them through the picturesque landscapes of central Honshu, where they engaged with an array of foresters, community groups, farmers, and government officials. The goal? To learn, share experiences, and exchange views on forest and landscape management.

Jacinta Douglas, reflecting on their journey, encapsulated the essence of their mission, saying,

*"Despite both land and cultural differences, it was incredible to establish connections with people based on our shared visions – to actively manage and care for lands, to create places in forests for people to enjoy, and connect land and community."*

“

*As experienced in Japan, increasing youth connection to nature at a prefectural level will not only ensure communities are able to passionately continue to care for the land - but also restore balance in the complex and interconnected relationship between humans and nature.*

Sharlee Dunolly-Lee  
NRM Project officer

The Japan Knowledge Exchange Tour was an opportunity for these two passionate advocates of land and community to broaden their horizons and build connections beyond borders. The journey was not just about sharing knowledge; it was a profound exploration of the universal values that unite people from diverse backgrounds.

Sharlee Dunolly-Lee emphasised the importance of youth engagement with nature and its far-reaching effects.

Their journey highlights the power of shared aspirations and the potential for global collaboration in the quest for sustainable land and community management.

Sharlee and Jacinta's inspiring expedition reminds us that, irrespective of borders and cultural differences, the shared love for our land and the environment can bring us together, fostering connections that transcend boundaries and create a brighter, greener future for all.

This journey was not just a tour; it was a testament to the unifying force of a shared vision, and the impact it can have on our world. Sharlee and Jacinta have returned home not just as travelers but as ambassadors of unity, showing us that when we come together with purpose, we can make the world a better place.

As we celebrate their remarkable journey, let it be a reminder of the limitless possibilities that emerge when people with shared passions connect, inspire, and make a difference.

Sharlee Dunolly-Lee and Jacinta Douglas (second & third from left) with the rest of their exchange group and the founders of the Gokayama Forestry College.





# Djaara leading the way on climate change

More than 75 people turned out to celebrate the launch of DJAARA's Climate Change Strategy, Turning 'wrong way' climate 'right way', in March.

The strategy emphasises the importance of DJAARA leadership in both mitigating climate change and adapting to the impacts of a changing climate.

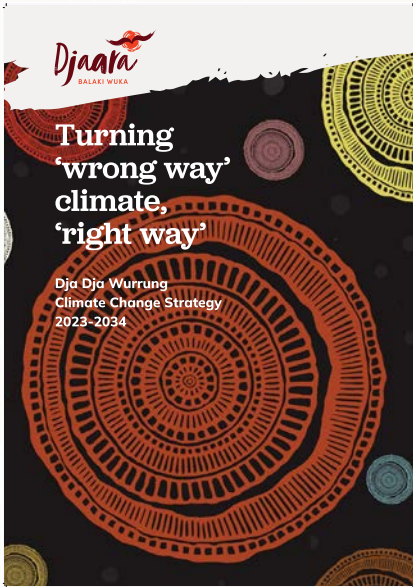
Climate change is being driven by colonial and western approaches to natural resource management where people, Country and climate are seen as separate.



Climate Change Policy Officer Oli Moraes (second from left), DJAARA General Manager Cassandra Lewis and our CEO Rodney Carter with Dona Cayetana (ADAPT Loddon Mallee) and Annika Kearton (Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance CEO).

Dja Dja Wurrung People take a holistic approach to climate action based on the principle that people, Country and climate are connected through spirit. Healing climate, healing Country and healing Dja Dja Wurrung People are very connected.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Climate Change Strategy brings together work that DJAARA is already leading on Country – including around natural



resource management, cultural burning, forest gardening and other healing activities on Country.

Dja Dja Wurrung leadership is needed to effectively address the issue of climate change in central Victoria. As Traditional Owners, Dja Dja Wurrung People have been listening to and caring for Country for millennia. We are highly attuned to the health of Country and of climate.

“  
*Our biocultural knowledge makes us best placed to know what is most likely to be successful in terms of reducing and adapting to climate change.*

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

DJAARA is eager to engage with those who live on or share responsibility for Country, and walk together as we face the challenge of climate change.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Climate Change Strategy was developed in collaboration with a diverse group of Dja Dja Wurrung People.

Focus areas and actions in the Strategy highlight DJAARA's leading role in cultural landscape management, restoring cultural fire to country, water and forest management and the renewable energy transition.



Scan the QR code to learn more about our launch



Partnerships and Policy team at Climate Strategy Launch, Frog Ponds, Bendigo. From left, Mark, Oli, Marykia, Jacinta, Harley, Tony, Mike, and Julian.

## CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY

The Dja Dja Wurrung Climate Change Strategy Turning 'wrong way' climate 'right way' emphasises the importance of Dja Dja Wurrung leadership in both stopping climate change from getting worse and adapting to the impacts of a changing climate.

A group of eight Dja Dja Wurrung Members supported the development of DJAARA's climate change strategy. This Wartaka (Dja Dja Wurrung knowledge group) developed the cultural framework, indicators and priorities that were embedded within the strategy. The deep cultural knowledge and priorities shared by Members has been an invaluable contribution to the strategy.



Oli Moraes, Climate Change Policy Officer speaking at the climate strategy launch at the Frog Ponds in Bendigo.

## DJAARA-LED CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION FORUM FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

A Climate Adaptation Forum in Bendigo for local government resulted in increased cultural awareness and understanding of Dja Dja Wurrung People's values and goals for climate action among attendees.

More than 30 local government representatives from 10 local councils on Djandak participated in the forum, which was led by DJAARA and Monash University researchers. Attendees were also more likely to engage with DJAARA following the forum.

## LUNCHTIME CLIMATE YARN SERIES

The climate change team held a series of staff engagement sessions on different climate change topics, challenges and opportunities. The series consisted of online and on-Country yarns with Indigenous leaders in the climate and renewable energy industries.



On-Country climate yarn about renewable energy, Indigenous apprenticeships, and the solar industry.





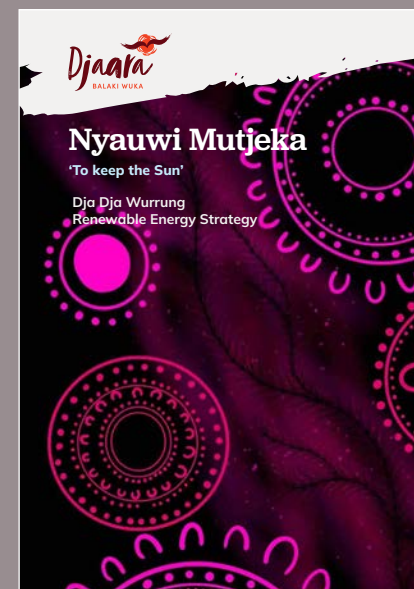
## Nyauwi Mutjeka, Our Renewable Energy Strategy launched!

The Dja Dja Wurrung Renewable Energy Strategy **Nyauwi Mutjeka** (to keep the sun) was launched in September in a ceremony with DJAARA and the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP, now the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, DEECA).

Noting the abundance of sun on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, our CEO Rodney Carter said the strategy is about healing People, healing Country and healing climate.

The Strategy sets out a pathway towards a modern energy future cognisant of our ancient knowledge and philosophy. The transition to renewable energy is a means of healing Country in a contemporary context.

There are contributions from children in the Strategy, in recognition of our duty of care towards future generations.



*Long after we have gone, the sun will still shine upon our children, and they will build upon and improve their own energy needs from the foundations we lay.*

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

DJAARA has gained the support of industry partners who share the vision for healing People, healing Country and healing climate through the transition to renewable energy systems.

DJAARA welcomes investment in renewable energy generation on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) and look forward to leading and collaborating with partners on renewable energy projects.

Energy justice for Djaara and all First Nations People underpins our approach to renewable energy, as this is critical for healing.

DJAARA wants to work with companies and government to ensure renewable energy developments on Djandak benefit our People and avoid negatively impacting Country, Native Title, Cultural Heritage, land rights and Dja Dja Wurrung's Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria.



Our CEO Rodney Carter, DJAARA General Manager Cassandra Lewis and Board Chair Trent Nelson at the Nyauwi Mutjeka launch

### Partners supporting the Dja Dja Wurrung Renewable Energy Strategy:

RACV Solar, the City of Greater Bendigo, Campaspe Shire Council and the City of Ballarat, Central Victorian Greenhouse Alliance, First Nations Clean Energy Network, C4CE, Bendigo Sustainability Group, Macedon Ranges Sustainability Group, Renewable Newstead, BREAZE, and Hepburn Energy.



Scan the QR code to view our Nyauwi Mutjeka Launch



# Renewable Energy

Since the launch of our Renewable Energy Strategy Nyauwi Mutjeka (to keep the sun), we have ramped up our transition towards renewable energy.

We have secured grants for the installation of a large solar system (135kW) on the new corporate and community centre and for two electric vehicle chargers at the site. We have also applied for a grant to purchase DJAARA's first electric vehicle, to begin the transition of our vehicle fleet away from fossil fuels.

Nyauwi Mutjeka also sets out that we want to work with companies and government to ensure

renewable energy developments on Djandak benefit our People. Over the past year we have met with many companies who are proposing transmission lines, wind and solar projects on Djandak. We have outlined DJAARA's rights, expectations, and Country plan aspirations and commenced negotiations to ensure the transition to renewable energy is a just one, that respects the rights of Traditional Owners and empowers DJAARA.

This will remain an important focus over the next 12 months as the number of renewable energy projects on Djandak continue to grow. Towards the end of the year, DJAARA received welcome funding from the State Government for a position devoted to implementing Nyauwi Mutjeka and renewable energy-related actions in DJAARA's Climate Change Strategy.

## AUSNET WESTERN RENEWABLES LINK

DJAARA is in negotiations with AusNet around the Western Renewables Link – a proposed new 190km overhead high-voltage electricity transmission line that will pass through Djandak. The transmission line will carry renewable energy from Bulgana in western Victoria to Sydenham in Melbourne's north-west.

The Western Renewables Link is critical infrastructure required to unlock the renewable energy potential of Victoria as the state transitions to cleaner, more sustainable energy.

AusNet has committed to work with DJAARA to seek to determine meaningful benefits and project outcomes for Dja Dja Wurrung People, in accordance with AusNet's statutory requirements, and pursuant to its Indigenous Engagement Policy.

DJAARA staff have met fortnightly with the AusNet project team as we've progressed toward the negotiation phase of the project.

The Board endorsed the proposed negotiation process with AusNet in its May meeting, and the nomination of two Directors to form part of the negotiation team.

The project team drafted a negotiation protocol, providing a clear statement of DJAARA's negotiation position from the outset. The negotiation continues with the aim of an in-principle agreement by the end of 2023.

VNI West (Victoria to New South Wales Interconnector West)

The VNI West is a new high-capacity transmission line. This is a high priority project for both the state and Commonwealth governments, and so planning for the project has already been well progressed. The transmission line is likely to have significant impacts at various scales across Djandak.

In November, the team met with the executive of Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) to discuss a proposed high-capacity overhead transmission line to be built between Victoria and New South Wales, traversing Djandak from south to north. The focus of this meeting was to detail Djaara's rights and interest in the proposed.

Illustration by Natasha Carter.  
A representation of Nyauwi, the woman who is the spirit of the sun.



# Dhelkunya Dja Policy

## VEAC CENTRAL WEST INVESTIGATION

DJAARA and DJANDAK contributed to the Victorian Environment Advisory Council's (VEAC's) Central West Investigation, which will eventually see nine new parks created on Djandak.

Dja Dja Wurrung were not represented on the committee formed to undertake the investigation, but DJAARA and DJANDAK provided considerable input, with DJANDAK leading the Aboriginal community engagement component of the investigation. Dja Dja Wurrung aspirations were highlighted through the VEAC process.

The investigation examined three distinct blocks of public land: the Mount Cole–Pyrenees block (near Beaufort and Avoca), the Wellsford block (near Bendigo) and the Wombat–Macedon block (near Daylesford and Trentham).

The nine parks are expected to be created during the Victorian Government's current term (i.e., by 2026). The Government has committed to partner with Traditional Owners in managing the parks and implementing the VEAC recommendations.

DJAARA has advocated for greater resourcing to enable the group to be involved in planning and implementing joint and sole management of all proposed parks on Djandak.

Cultural Heritage values were identified at each of the park areas. The areas of the proposed Wombat-Lerderderg National Park that are on Djandak are highly valued by Dja Dja Wurrung People.

The Land Policy team at the Department of Environment, Energy and Climate Action (DEECA) who are responsible for VEAC's Central West Investigation have briefed their senior executives on Dja Dja Wurrung People's aspirations to actively participate and on the resource needs identified by DJAARA to enable this.

## CODE OF FOREST PRACTICE

DJAARA is contributing to the Victorian State Government's comprehensive review of the Code of Practice for Timber Production 2014, which DEECA will complete by late 2023.

DEECA has invited Traditional Owners to contribute directly to this Code Review.

DJAARA has engaged Indufor forest consultants to support Dja Dja Wurrung People to participate and contribute effectively and meaningfully to the review.

## PUBLIC LAND ACT REVIEW

DJAARA is collaborating with Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and Taungurung Land and Waters Council in a joint Nations submission to DEECA on the Victorian Government's proposed Public Land Act.

The government is proposing to replace three existing Crown Land Acts (the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978, the Forests Act 1958 and the Land Act 1958) with a new Public Land Act. The new Public Land Act will operate alongside the National Parks Act 1975, which will continue to protect significant parts of Victoria's diverse natural environment.

The principal advantage of the new legislation is that it will allow for Traditional Owner management of public land for cultural purposes.

## NATION BUILDING - AGREEMENT MAKING

The Balaki Wurrekang (Mob talking to Mob) project team works towards strong, sustainable, and ongoing relationships with our partners to bring Dja Dja Wurrung rights to the forefront.

As a People and a Corporation, we have felt the effects of recent years' isolation and its impact on our ability to connect, particularly on Djandak.

We aim to continue strengthening the Corporation's capacity and capability to engage with Dja Dja Wurrung People, to improve Dja Dja Wurrung representation in the work we do.

In the past year, we have sought feedback from the Dja Dja Wurrung community around the standards Members expect of DJAARA and our partners as we engage in agreement making.

DJAARA has also begun meeting with local governments on Djandak to better understand areas of mutual benefit.

## REVIEW, RECOGNITION AND DHELKUNYA DJA REFRESH

The Dhelkunya Dja Recognition and Review project is working towards a Recognition and Achievement report by the end of 2023, and the release of a refreshed Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan in the first half of 2024.

The team has surveyed members on the Dhelkunya Dja achievements they are most proud of, and how they would like to be engaged for the duration of the project. Staff also provided input at a recent all staff on-Country day.

It is anticipated the Dhelkunya Dja goals will remain the same but, as much has been achieved over the last 10 years, some of the actions and objectives will be updated to better reflect where we are now.

Scan here to view all the Regional Partnerships taking place.





# DJAARA SIGNPOSTS A NEW WAY OF CARING FOR COUNTRY

A massive storm didn't dampen the mood as DJAARA, Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board and Parks Victoria celebrated joint management with the unveiling of eye-catching signage at One Tree Hill in Greater Bendigo National Park in April.

The new DJAARA-branded signage promotes the park as one of six that have been handed back to DJAARA to manage jointly with Parks Victoria, and celebrates Dja Dja Wurrung contemporary presence on Djandak.

Joint management (DJAARA leading the management of the six parks) was a key element in DJAARA's 2013 Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria.

A lot of work has happened over the past 10 years, including establishing the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board and, together with Parks Victoria, developing and implementing the Joint Management Plan. The event celebrated the first fruits of this work, and the continued embedding of Djaara on Djandak.



Parks Victoria District Manager Suzanne Hughes with our CEO Rodney Carter and DJAARA General Manager Cassandra Lewis at the signage launch in the Greater Bendigo National Park.



Uncle Graham Atkinson (Chair of the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board) with our CEO Rodney Carter at the signage launch in the Greater Bendigo National Park.

“

*Working out how we do joint management has been a learning journey for everyone – and we look forward to continued work with Parks Victoria to further improve the process and deliver more tangible outcomes for the community in the future.*

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board Chair Uncle Graham Atkinson said it was satisfying, after years of planning and laying the foundations for joint management, to see the signs finally installed.

He also said that participating in Land Management is central to our fundamental human and cultural rights. Joint management is laying the foundations for self-determination.

“

*I am very proud, and we should all be.*

Uncle Graham Atkinson  
Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board Chair

District Manager, Parks Victoria Suzanne Hughes extended her thanks to DJAARA.

“

*This occasion marks an exciting moment in time for the jointly managed parks, with traditional culture, artwork, and language beautifully represented in the landscape.*

Suzanne Hughes  
District Manager, Parks Victoria

Signage and other Dja-Dja-Wurrung-designed facilities are also being installed in the other jointly managed parks.





## Galkangu | Joint Management

This is the term used to describe the formal partnership arrangement between DJAARA and the Victorian Government, where both parties share knowledge to jointly manage the six Dja Dja Wurrung Parks.

The six Parks are the Greater Bendigo National Park, Hepburn Regional Park, Paddys Ranges State Park, Kara Kara National Park, Kooyoora (Guyura) State Park, and Wehla Nature Conservation Reserve.

Joint Management recognises that Dja Dja Wurrung People as the Traditional Owners of Central Victoria, have a significant connection to Country and, with that, have inherited rights and responsibilities to care for Country.

The goal of Joint Management is to enable the Traditional Owner knowledge and connection to Country to be expressed in the planning and management of the six Dja Dja Wurrung Parks.

This year has provided opportunities to continue implementing the Joint Management Plan for the Dja Dja Wurrung Parks but has not been without challenges.

Highlights have included the installation of new entry signs at One Tree Hill, signalling a renewed sense of identity for Dja Dja Wurrung People, and the transformation of Kara Kara National Park's Upper Teddington Reservoir Campground. Each achievement embodies our shared commitment to empowering DJAARA's role as a land manager.

## Greater Bendigo National Park

### One Tree Hill Signage Launch

The DJAARA-branded signage installed by DJANDAK across several locations in the Greater Bendigo National Park, completed our Entrance Signage trial (see feature story). Following the trial, signage continues to be installed in the joint managed parks across Djandak.

### Larni Yirrip

Larni Yirrip (meaning home or place of ironbark tree) sets out to create a unique camping experience on the outskirts of the Bendigo urban environment, providing a cultural space for education and recreation for all community to enjoy.

The project is progressing through planning stages. Site works to install shelters, toilets, roading, signage, ponding, firepits, and designated campsites will commence once planning approval has been received.

Larni Yirrip is a Victoria's Great Outdoors funded initiative being led by DJAARA, with project management assistance offered by Coliban Water.

## Work to begin on visitor hub upgrade at Guyura (Kooyoora State Park)

Visitors to Guyura (Kooyoora State Park) will soon be able to enjoy improved facilities, with DJAARA beginning upgrade works on the visitor hub from mid-June, in collaboration with Parks Victoria.

This significant development aims to enhance the visitor experience while preserving the important natural and cultural values of the park.

The works will be delivered in a staged approach to minimise disruption to park visitors.

Construction will begin with a new shelter at the Melville Caves lookout car park, followed by an upgrade to the Melville Caves picnic area.

Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Rodney Carter was excited about the positive impact the changes would have on Guyura and the wider community.

"This project aligns with our vision of creating a welcoming space for all to enjoy, while fostering a deep appreciation for the land, cultural heritage, and ecological diversity," Rodney said.

The completed project will improve visitor comfort and convenience, with new shelters, toilet blocks, and seating areas in picturesque surroundings.

Upgraded walking tracks and signage will improve access, navigation, and safety, allowing visitors to fully explore and appreciate the park's natural beauty.



Dja Dja Wurrung language, cultural signage, and interpretation elements will enable visitors to learn more about Dja Dja Wurrung People and their history, and develop a stronger connection to the land.

The project embraces sustainable design, seamlessly integrating Dja Dja Wurrung-style furniture while minimising environmental impact.

Parks Victoria Northern Regional Director Chris Corbell acknowledged the immense importance of Guyura to the community.

"This upgrade project reflects our commitment to the park's preservation and the enrichment of visitor experiences," Mr Corbell said.

For more information, project updates and to see the projects concept designs please visit the DJAARA Fact Sheets tab at <https://djadjawurrung.com.au/resources/>





KOOYOORA STATE PARK AND WEHLA NATURE CONSERVATION RESERVE

In a year marked by several large flood events and subsequent park closures, progress has been achieved towards enhancing user experience at Kooyoora State Park.

New DJAARA-branded park entrance signs (image above) were installed, which show that Kooyoora (Guyura) State Park is being Jointly Managed. DJAARA and DJANDAK project teams advanced designs for the redevelopment of the main visitor nodes at Kooyoora for the Guyura Recreational, Cultural Practices and Customs (RCPC) Area Project.

A complementary project is being planned to better connect and map the surrounding trail network and install wayfinding and interpretive signage.

DJANDAK has undertaken Wheel Cactus injection works within the park, contributing to our broader conservation efforts in collaboration with Parks Victoria.

ENGAGEMENT

DJAARA began engaging with La Trobe University's Outdoor Education Department in a step towards building relationships with outdoor educators who frequent our Joint Managed Parks, and towards nurturing cultural competency in our future educators.

Kooyoora State Park is one of Victoria's most visited parks for high-school outdoor education camps, which are facilitated by La Trobe University.

The Dja Dja Wurrung Ranger Team conducted Cultural Heritage surveys, focusing on potential rock art sites, at Kooyoora State Park and Whela Nature Conservation Reserve in partnership with the Managing Country Together team at Parks Victoria.

KARA KARA NATIONAL PARK

DJAARA and DJANDAK project teams collaborated to develop project plans, designs, and engagement processes for the Upper Teddington Reservoir Recreational, Cultural Practices and Customs (RCPC) Area Project, which will upgrade the existing campground. The project aims to improve camping experience, whilst offering enriched cultural experiences.



The Djuwima Djandaki Wartaka was engaged in developing the strategic vision and concept designs for the campground, with multiple on-Country days and cultural practice session.



Djuwima Djandaki Wartaka at Kara Kara National park December 2022.



Djuwima Djandaki Wartaka working with landscape designers.

The DJAARA Joint Management Team have been extending our support to DJANDAK's Dit-dit Djina Project in Kara Kara National Park. Dit-dit Djina means 'hard-hooved animal' and the project is exploring deer monitoring and management in Western Victoria. This initiative reflects our new role as land managers that will support and foster environmental stewardship, cultural enrichment, and community engagement.

HEPBURN REGIONAL PARK

Floods at Hepburn Regional Park caused widespread damage to many visitor areas and closures are still in place while funding is sought to redevelop and reopen damaged areas. Hepburn Regional Park is unique among the jointly managed parks, being the only one that maintains regular water flows in the creeks and gullies throughout the year.

Work continued on the Lalgambuk Garrang project to upgrade the Mt Franklin Visitor Site, with DJANDAK installing a new shelter and signage, replacing the toilets, and removing woody weeds. Significantly, DJAARA-designed entrance signs to Lalgambuk were installed, putting Dja Dja Wurrung language back in the landscape and demonstrating a Dja Dja Wurrung presence in our parks.



DJAARA-designed signage demonstrates a Dja Dja Wurrung presence at Lalgambuk.



DJAARA worked closely with Parks Victoria and Hepburn Shire Council to install dual-named signage at the turnoff into the site, and had Google Maps updated to reflect the name Lalgambuk.

DJAARA is supporting the DJANDAK-led 'Hepburn Healthy Trails project, exploring access and connections to bushwalking trails in the Hepburn Regional Park. This is a Victoria's Great Outdoors (VGO) funded project.

The team has worked with DJAARA's Djandak Wi team and Parks Victoria to plan cultural burning in the park to manage culturally significant areas and weed infestations.

PADDYS RANGES STATE PARK

Several opportunities for investment in Paddys Ranges were identified and planned, including the replacement of the Settling Ponds picnic area toilet, cultural thinning using Galk-galk Dhelkunya principles, and replacement of road signs.

DJAARA is excited to work with Parks Victoria to provide new park facilities such as toilets, to improve visitor experience.

The Joint Managed Parks team has worked with the Forest Gardening team to develop a project brief for cultural thinning activities in the park.



# Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board

Manyangu ngulumbara dhelkunya Djandak murrup  
*We meet together to return good health to Country and Spirit*

The Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board (DDLMB) was established through the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA), to oversee the development of a Joint Management Plan (JMP) for the six Dja Dja Wurrung Parks, which were returned to Djaara in 2013, on Aboriginal title for the purposes of Joint Management.

The goal of Joint Management is to enable our knowledge and connection to Country to be expressed in the planning and management of the six Dja Dja Wurrung Parks and reserves.

## WORK OF THE DDLMB

The Land Management Board takes its name 'Dhelkunya Dja', meaning 'healing Country', from the Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014, which is the touchstone for a Joint Management Plan to deliver on the aspirations of the Dja Dja Wurrung People.

While DJAARA's Country Plan (2014) covers the entire Recognition and Settlement Agreement area, DDLMB's Joint Management Plan (2018) covers the six Joint Managed Parks under the Board's legislated responsibilities.

Since the adoption of the Joint Management Plan in 2018, the Board has had an enabling role, to support and oversee the implementation of the Plan, working closely with the Joint Management Partners - DJAARA, DJANDAK, Parks Victoria, and the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA)

The Board convenes the Joint Management Plan Implementation Team (JMPIT) to support the

collaboration between JMP Partners. The DDLMB receives Quarterly Gapa Giya Reports that chart the progress of implementing the JMP and provide avenues for the DDLMB to assist if any issues arise. Gapa Giya means, 'to know, to think / to ask, to tell' in Dja Dja Wurrung language. The successive reports give the Board confidence that implementation is gaining momentum.

Joint Management of the parks is delivered on the ground through a Partnership Agreement between DJAARA and Parks Victoria. JMP Implementation has matured into a sustainable, innovative, and empowering arrangement for land management, which is accepted and demonstrably workable.

The DDLMB provides an important means for Dja Dja Wurrung People to participate in the management of Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) and is an incubator for emerging leaders to acquire governance experience. DJAARA's chosen model for delivering Joint Management is protected and empowered under legislation, and provides a sturdy structure for undertaking Joint Management, while heading towards the goal of self-determination.



## A YEAR TO CELEBRATE

This year, we have started to see the JMP projects roll out one by one. It fills us all with immense pride. The experience that DJAARA and the Joint Management Partners have gained over the last five years gives us a solid foundation to eventually bring more parks back to Dja Dja Wurrung People on Aboriginal title.

The ultimate goal is to achieve self-determination in the management of traditional lands and water – a goal that is more in reach as our collective wisdom, capacity and experience grows.

Each year, the DDLMB coordinates a program of field trips to the Joint Managed parks and invites partners, the Dja Dja Wurrung Ranger Team, and Parks Victoria staff engaged in Joint Management to participate. In fulfilling the DDLMB's oversight functions, it is important for the Board to visit the Parks and gain a deeper appreciation of the implementation issues and progress data delivered through the Gapa Giya reporting.

The Board's on-Country gatherings are rewarding opportunities to strengthen relationships with our partners and to build shared appreciation of the Dja Dja Wurrung aspirations for these places.



DJAARA recommends the appointment of Board members to the Minister for the Environment, under the *Conservation, Forests and Lands Act 1987 (Vic)*. In 2019, Dja Dja Wurrung membership of the Board was increased to five to strengthen the Traditional Owner leadership. The Dja Dja Wurrung Board members were supported by two senior government representatives:

The Board comprised the following members from 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023:

**Graham Atkinson**  
DDLMB Chairperson

**Nikita Charles**  
Deputy Chairperson

**Rodney Carter**  
Secretary's Nominee

**Ron Kerr Jnr**

**Marilyne Nicholls**

**Marg Allan PSM / Anthony Judd**  
(Regional Director, DEECA)

**Daniel McLaughlin / Chris Corbell**  
(Regional Director, Parks Victoria)



# Corporate & Business Services

The 2022/23 financial year saw the continued extraordinary growth of the Dja Dja Wurrung Group.

Staff numbers increased by a third, while the locations of Dja Dja Wurrung Group offices and worksites have more than tripled during the year, presenting additional workforce and asset management challenges.

The Business Services team was restructured to become the Corporate and Business Services team, reflecting the breadth of the work undertaken to support a rapidly expanding group of business and services across the Dja Dja Wurrung Group.

Additional staff were recruited to the team, and two new trainee roles in finance and IT were established.

The team continued to provide a range of corporate services that support DJAARA to operate efficiently.

Rapid growth has resulted in further increases in the demand for corporate services such as human resources and payroll support, accounts payable/receivable activities, insurance and claims management, information and communication technology infrastructure and support, and policy development and review.

In addition, the team expanded its services to the Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises, including supporting the expansion of DJANDAK and DUMAWUL and the establishment of DJAKITJ. Additional work sites were provided for DUMAWUL, and for staff at DJAARA and DJANDAK.

The team is proud to support the work the Dja Dja Wurrung Group does in the community, excited to be part of the Dja Dja Wurrung Group journey and honored to be part of an organisation advocating for Djaara.

## PROJECTS

A significant focus for the team this year was improving existing services and processes and preparing for the introduction of new processes.

A 9-day fortnight was introduced to improve staff work/life balance. The Human Resources team and Payroll function were instrumental in turning this initiative into reality.

The Business System Improvement Project involved collaborating with all parts of the Group to:

- improve integration and automation of financial processes to increase efficiency in processing accounts payable
- migrate to a new financial software system to enable project and job costing financial reporting
- introduce e-commerce functionality to enable online shopping and service requests.

The outcome of this project will become more evident in 2023/24 as the various parts of the project go live. Two people have become permanent employees supporting the implementation of this project.

The team also increased its focus on occupational health and safety including collaborating on the implementation of SiteDocs, a software program to help manage better safety practices including incident and hazard reporting.



# Human Resources

The Human Resources (HR) Team supports employees at the Dja Dja Wurrung Group through the whole job lifecycle - including recruitment, training, goal setting, learning, and future growth - using our hearts and hands.

We support the Dja Dja Wurrung Group's leadership to make great decisions by providing statistics and communicating trends around employee engagement.

### KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

With rapid growth continuing across the Group, 64 positions were recruited across the year, which represents almost one third of the Group staff. The HR Team has worked hard to make sure processes and systems, policies and wellbeing support continue to support the Group and all employees.

The team has continued its people-first focus, with projects guided by the Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan. Our activities during the year have largely been driven by a desire to rebuild connections and to ensure every person is happy and healthy at work, and empowered and self-determining in the actions they take within their work. These themes reflect the Country Plan goals 1 & 7.

### SUPPORTING EDUCATION, AWARENESS, AND TRAINING

The HR Team is proud to contribute towards the objectives of Goal 1 in the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan, by supporting the career development of Dja Dja Wurrung People, for example, through training.

Over the financial year, eight Djaara employees completed a DEECA General Firefighting course; two Djaara employees completed a Certificate III in Business Administration; a further two began a Traineeship towards a Certificate III in Business Administration. One Djaara employee was accepted into a Law Degree course. Three Djaara employees completed, and one is undertaking, a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management. Another Djaara employee is undertaking a Certificate III in Ecology and Conservation Management.

- Two Djaara employees completed their Cert III in Business Administration
- Two Djaara employees currently undertaking their Cert III in Business Administration
- One Djaara employee was accepted into Law to further tertiary education
- Three Djaara employees completed a Cert IV in Aboriginal cultural heritage management
- One Djaara employee is currently undertaking a Cert IV in Aboriginal cultural heritage management
- One Djaara employee is currently undertaking Cert III in Ecology & conservation management

We provided educational development and training programs to strengthen our internal capabilities and support those who work at the Dja Dja Wurrung Group to be healthy, happy people.

Staff attended lateral violence workshops with Richard Frankland, and all our leaders completed mental health first aid training. These training tools explored cultural safety themes and provided opportunities for employees to deepen their knowledge and bring us closer together.

We introduced a leadership development program to embed key skills and knowledge to improve safety and wellbeing for all.

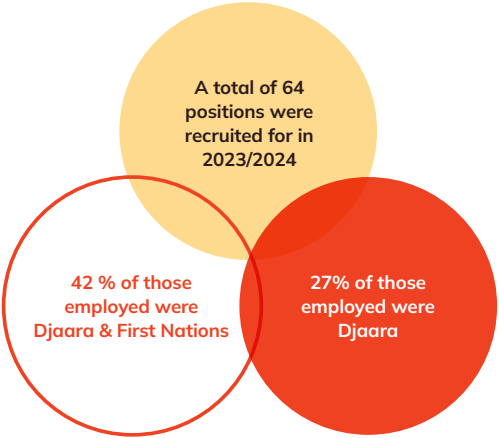
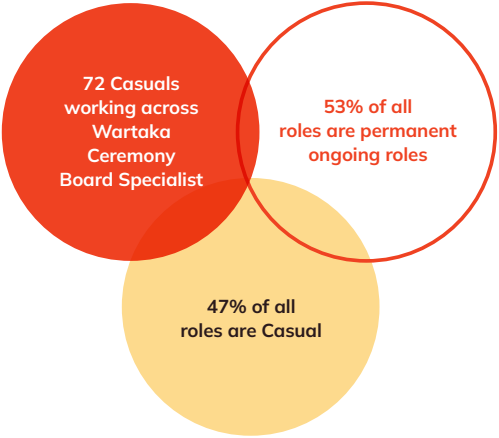
In the coming year, we plan to operationalise cultural safety guidelines, which will involve providing Cultural Awareness training developed by DUMAWUL across the organisation.

### PROJECTS AND IMPROVEMENTS:

To bridge understanding across all parts of the organisation and improve our “one team” vision, we undertook a project to enhance the induction process. New employees participate in structured meetings with all teams across the Group, with the CEO on Country and with other key leadership roles.

Improvements to our employee portal, Gartna Balak, include a new goal-setting module, improved learning, and development features, and a 6-month onboarding questionnaire prompting open dialogue with managers.

We deployed a pulse survey around employee attitude and engagement to enable prompt responses to changing views.

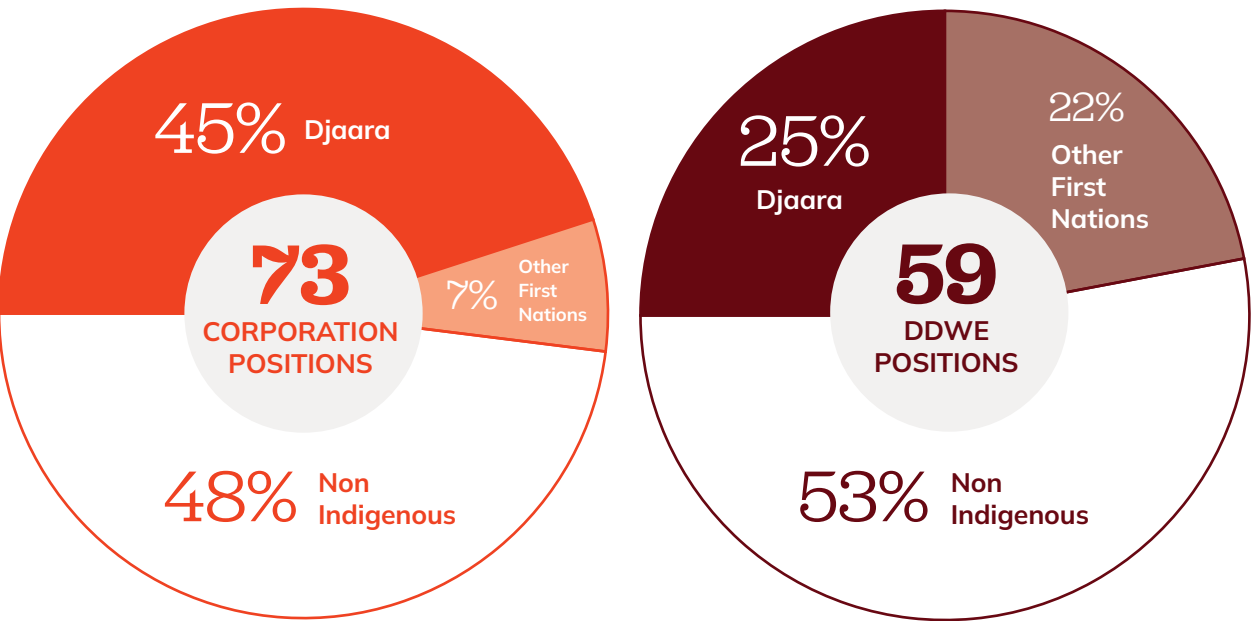


### EMPLOYEE FACTS LINKED TO THE DJAARA COUNTRY PLAN

As of June 2023, the Dja Dja Wurrung Group employed 204 permanent and casual staff.

In line with the objectives of Goal 1 in the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan, the Group works to recruit and retain Djaara and First Nations employees wherever possible. More than half of all employees across the Group are Djaara. At the same time, non-Indigenous employees are warmly welcomed into the DJAARA family.





Number of employee positions 2022.



# Financial Report Extract

The financial statements are general purpose financial statements that have been prepared in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards - Simplified Disclosures issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board (AASB) in order to meet the requirements of the Corporations (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Act 2006. The group is a not-for-profit entity for financial reporting purposes under Australian Accounting Standards.

The surplus of the group for the financial year ended 30 June 2023 after provision for income tax expense was \$6,748.141.

## REVIEW OF OPERATIONS

At 30 June 2023, the group recorded a strong financial position, with current assets exceeding current liabilities by \$21,018,555, providing the directors with sufficient working capital to ensure the group can pay its debts as and when they fall due.

The group also recorded total equity at 30 June 2023 of \$26,185,360. Of such total equity,

\$16,522,269 is committed at balance date and has therefore been disclosed as a reserve. The audited financial statements submitted to ORIC will cover the period 1 July 2022 to 30 June 2023. Based on the information provided in the reports the group is solvent as at 30 June 2023 and has sufficient resources to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

## DJA DJA WURRUNG ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

Due to the downturn in the economy during 2021-22 the investment market saw a decline in the market value of investments that had a flow on effect to Dja Dja Wurrung investment holdings. This has begun to recover in the 2022-23 year as the economy and interest rates begin to rise and is expected to continue to recover in 2023-24 financial year.

Investments CURRENT	2023 \$	2022 \$	
Term deposit	534,530	525,242	Funds have been set aside in this term deposit to provide for future asset replenishment.
Indigenous Real Estate Development Funds	1,388,400	1,475,881	IBA I-REIT High growth, commercial real-estate as per Investment Strategy recommendation
Indigenous Prosperity Fund – Growth Fund	1,517,945	1,161,096	IBA - Indigenous Prosperity Fund - Growth High growth
Indigenous Prosperity Fund – Income Fund	1,384,830	1,330,051	I BA - Indigenous Prosperity Fund - Income Modest growth, less risk
Total Investments	4,825,705	4,492,270	This represents an increase since last financial year due to economic growth and interest rates recovering during the period.





# Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises



## A message from our General Manager Economic Development – Steve Jackson



The benefit of extensive planning to diversify Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises (DDWE) was realised with foundations established for two new enterprises to operate alongside DJANDAK – DUMAWUL (cultural tourism, creative arts, and education) & DJAKITJ (food and fibre).

These new businesses support the Yarka (mission/purpose) of DDWE by introducing new ways to support capacity building, economic development and employment for Dja Dja Wurrung and the wider Aboriginal Community.

With the expanding business portfolio, it has been timely to begin aligning the family of brands with DJAARA.

The new DDWE branding will profile Dja Dja Wurrung language as a uniquely defining element of each trading entity while also maximising the recognition of the DJAARA identity. This initiative will support the next generation of enterprise development as and attribution of goodwill to Dja Dja Wurrung People.

The Yarka is inspired by the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan. In “putting Djaara back in landscape”, this year saw the opening of the Bendigo Law Courts and the completion ceremony for Galkangu - Bendigo GovHub that complements the previous Bendigo TAFE and Djaara Lights developments to create a unique urban landscape giving voice to Djaara Values in a contemporary way. Djaara-centred design continues to expand in application such as landscape developments at Lalgambuk (Mt Franklin), Boort and Walmer State Forest and the interpretative story of the Goldfields Track. These capabilities will support further Joint Management initiatives into the future.

Partnerships continue to enable all DDWE operations. This includes establishing a new Forest and Fire team within DJANDAK to implement the Djandak Wi policy and accessing DUMAWUL's skills in education to develop the learning materials.

DJANDAK has also demonstrated its maturity in leading works with Bush Heritage, state agencies and other Traditional Owner entities to achieve Caring for Country outcomes such as wheel cactus management at Buckrabanyule.

Similarly, DUMAWUL, presented a first of its kind, Malamiya Mang Arts Festival, A Dja Dja Wurrung Arts Festival.

Malamiya Mang featured Dja Dja Wurrung Culture, knowledge and art over five days in April and created opportunity for the first Djaara Guided Tour of Bendigo which is to become a regular feature of the tourist calendar.

DUMAWUL was launched in November 2022 with a magnificent showcase event at the Capital Theatre in Bendigo. It brings together independent Dja Dja Wurrung businesses and agencies operating in the creative industries to enhance visitor experiences across the region. There is more to come so watch this space.

Each of the businesses relies on and integrates Dja Dja Wurrung in the design and delivery of products and services. The importance of the DJAARA Cultural Integrity Guidelines is recognised through our internal operations and through our service engagement with the different market segments.

We continue to innovate approaches of co-design across Country that engages and provides employment to Dja Dja Wurrung People in their “family business”.

Where our staff are the difference each day, and with the expert governance and support of the DDWE Board, it is with great pleasure to commend the achievements of DJANDAK, DUMAWUL and DJAKITJ showcased within the pages of this Report.

On behalf of the staff and management of DJANDAK, DUMAWUL and DJAKITJ – the Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises,

Respectfully,

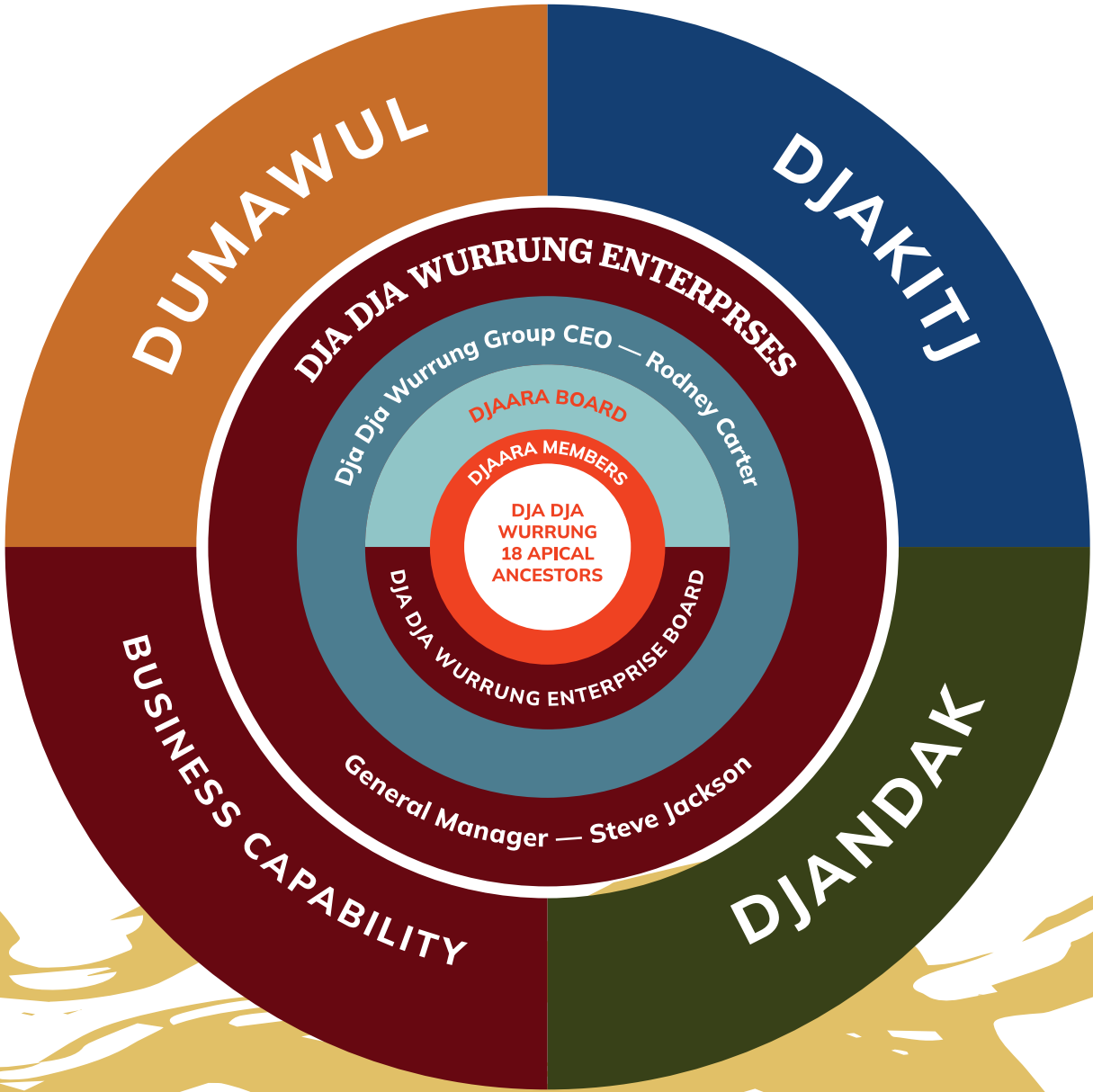
**Steve Jackson**

General Manager  
Economic Development



# Business Capability

The Business Capability team supports the three Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises, DJANDAK, DUMAWUL & DJAKITJ with business systems and support including finance, project, people, and safety.



Over the year the key achievements of the team have been:

- development of new branding for the Enterprise entities
- development of new websites for DJANDAK and DJAKITJ
- supporting the Business Systems Implementation Project to bring in the new finance system MYOB.
- establishing a new online safety management system: SiteDocs
- implementing the new risk management system in the Enterprises
- establishing project and program reporting dashboards for all high priority projects.

The Business Capability team also facilitated two all-staff on-Country days to build relationships and strengthen connection to Country.



Sharnie Hamilton points out an orchid at the all-staff on-Country Day in May.

## COMMUNITY PERCEPTIONS OF TRADITIONAL OWNER NATIVE FOODS & BOTANICALS: RESEARCH PROJECT

We undertook consumer research to inform the development of Australian native food and fibre products for our DJAKITJ enterprise.

The research project involved consumer, market and landscape research, and branding development for DJAKITJ products. More than 300 Victorians were surveyed to understand perceptions around Traditional Owner native foods and botanicals, including consumer attitudes, purchasing behaviour, and beliefs.

Key findings were:

- Awareness of Australian native ingredients is generally low (76% rated their awareness as low or very low).
- However, curiosity is very high, with 90% likely to try an ingredient from the land on which they live or work.
- Almost three quarters (72%) of respondents said they are interested in learning more about the story of the product and its Culture at the point of purchase (i.e., it needs to be on the packaging).
- More than half (58%) will be more inclined to purchase if the produce is grown and harvested by Traditional Owners from the land on which they reside.

The research project was completed with a grant from the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations. It was informed by the Victoria Traditional Owner Native Food and Botanicals Strategy (TONFABS).



All-staff on-Country day at Notley picnic and camping area in May. Our Group CEO Rodney opening the day.



# DJANDAK: Pioneering sustainable economic growth with cultural integrity

DJANDAK, meaning Country in Dja Dja Wurrung language, stands as an independent and Supply Nation-certified business that holds a pivotal role in the realisation of our Corporation's goals.

At its core, DJANDAK is committed to self-determination and the enhancement of community well-being by establishing a sustainable economic foundation.

DJANDAK is the longest standing Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprise, celebrating 10 years in operation in 2023.

DJANDAK embodies the essence of a “traditional way of business”, harmonising contemporary economic pursuits with the preservation of our rich Dja Dja Wurrung culture.

Our dedicated team, steeped in cultural wisdom, brings forth a unique blend of services and innovative solutions that resonate with the needs of the Dja Dja Wurrung community.

## COMMITMENT TO CULTURAL VALUES

DJANDAK remains unwavering in its commitment to uphold Dja Dja Wurrung values and the healing of Dja Dja Wurrung Country. With expertise in natural resource management, open space development, and cultural co-design, DJANDAK continues to build a reputation as a trusted First Nations business across Country.

## GUIDED BY POLICY

DJANDAK is guided by the supporting policies of the Country Plan, shaping the development and implementation of services across DDWE entities. They inform the work we do now and into the future. They include:

Cultural Integrity Guidelines:  
We commit to integrating these guidelines into our operational processes, respecting and upholding Djaara values.

Forest Gardening: DJANDAK will develop a strategy for the implementation of this policy, aligning it with Healthy Country Planning activities.

Whole-of-Business Leadership:  
We are poised to launch a comprehensive leadership program, fostering a positive workplace culture that empowers our staff and drives success.

In summary, DJANDAK, is a vital entity that fuses cultural integrity with sustainable economic growth. With ambitious goals, a commitment to Dja Dja Wurrung values, and a visionary approach to leadership, DJANDAK is not only leading across Country but is also a model of responsible and culturally attuned business practices.





## DJANDAK Design Team: Djaara cultural expression in public space

In the Design team we work with DJAARA Members on architecture, landscape architecture, art and interpretive signage projects.

Our team includes landscape architects, graphic designers and Cultural Heritage advisors.

We work closely with DJAARA Members and Dja Dja Wurrung artists to make sure that we have a Dja Dja Wurrung way of seeing the world and doing things coming through every part of a project.

We listen as DJAARA Members generously share knowledge about the Country we are on and what they would like to see in a project. Then we help the architects to design buildings, landscapes, signs and artworks to express those cultural themes.

DJANDAK are leading the way in architecture that reflects the culture of the Traditional Custodians in places that are currently dominated by colonial architecture and ways of designing.

This year the Bendigo Law Courts opened and put Dja Dja Wurrung presence into the heart of the CBD. Dja Dja Wurrung designs have been embedded into the new Galkangu - Bendigo GovHub awaiting the official launch later in the year. Some other projects that are progressing include the Maryborough Hospital, Maryborough Art Gallery and Lake Boort Campground.

We faced some challenges over the last year with enough staff to meet the growing interest in our work and we have recently expanded the team to continue to put Dja Dja Wurrung Culture into projects across Djandak.

### WORKING TOWARDS DJA DJA WURRUNG COUNTRY PLAN GOALS

Design team projects help Dja Dja Wurrung People to be strong in their identity (Goal 1). They improve wellbeing by getting Members out on Country to connect with each other and Djandak. Dja Dja Wurrung People can see their Culture reflected and celebrated in the world around them.

Design team projects contribute to the Traditional Owner economy (Goal 8) by providing employment to DJAARA Members – advising or working as artists on projects – and by making a profit that goes back to benefit Dja Dja Wurrung People through the Corporation.



Galkangu Bendigo Gov Hub by Lyons Architects with Djaara Wartaka. Circle of Elders sculpture by Rebecca Phillips and facade artwork by Natasha Carter.



Galkangu facade artwork by Natasha Carter.



Galkangu internal courtyard designed with Djaara Wartaka.



Circle of Elders sculpture at Galkangu by Rebecca Phillips.



Troy Firebrace working on the design for the meeting table at Galkangu Bendigo GovHub.



Rebecca Phillips and Aunty Marilyne Nicholls next to their sculptural water element at the Bendigo Law Courts forecourt area.



Claire Reynolds, DJANDAK Design team, and Anne Marie Pisani, Aspect Studios, planning campsite with the Wartaka at Lake Boort.



Interpretive signage at Bendigo Botanic Gardens designed by DJANDAK in collaboration with the Wartaka.



DJANDAK assisted Six Degrees Architects and Aspect Studios Landscape Architects drawing masterplan for the Commonwealth Games Athletes Village in response to Djaara values guided by the Wartaka.



Maryborough Hospital design by SDH Architects. Djaara artists are currently working on entry element and internal artworks.



DJAARA held a smoking ceremony to cleanse inside the new Bendigo Law Courts prior to the Ministerial opening event.



## DIANDAK: Gatjin (water)

Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) have an extensive knowledge of how waterways function and how they should be managed.

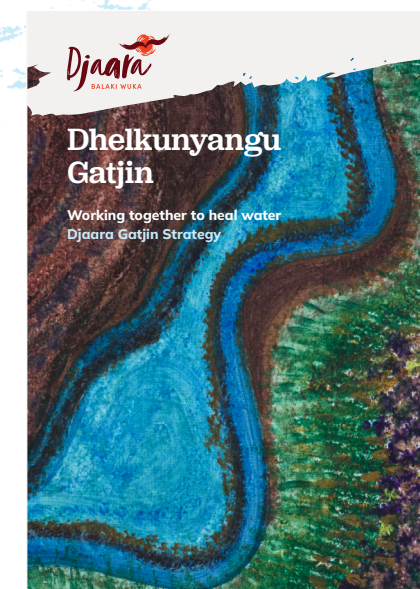
The management of water on Djandak currently doesn't reflect the sustainable management that Djaara implemented over thousands of generations. Djaara aim to return the traditional ways of managing gatjin to heal waterways and return Spirit to gatjin.

To progress this journey, we are working in collaboration with water managers to understand how water is managed currently – the water management frameworks and techniques that have been imposed on Djandak.

### DHELKUNYANGU GATJIN – DJAARA'S GATJIN STRATEGY

This year the Gatjin (water) Team developed DJAARA's Gatjin Strategy, Dhelkunyangu Gatjin, which means 'working together to heal water' in Dja Dja Wurrung language. The Strategy was publicly released in late June.

Dhelkunyangu Gatjin is a guide to involving Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) in the management of gatjin across Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) to achieve healthy Country and healthy waterways.



The Strategy provides a pathway for government water agencies to meet their obligations under DJAARA's 2013 Recognition and Settlement Agreement, which acknowledges that Djaara, as Traditional Owners, are required to be included in the management of natural resources, including water.

To implement the Strategy, we will work in the spirit of ngaldurrong (working together) with our partners. We have begun establishing an implementation control group with representation from all water agencies on Djandak, which will oversee actions over the coming years to deliver Djaara's vision for Gatjin.

We have started to influence water management through Djaara rules and policies, which we have developed with the expert advice and knowledge of Kapa Gatjin. A recycled water policy is currently being developed and further policies on stormwater, groundwater and others will follow.



## ABORIGINAL WATERWAY ASSESSMENTS

Kapa Gatjin, DJAARA's water knowledge group, undertakes Aboriginal Waterways Assessments (AWAs) of waterways across Djandak.

AWAs allow Djaara to assess a waterway's environmental and cultural health, and to apply knowledge to heal and manage it.

AWAs have been completed across many parts of Djandak this year including in the mountain streams of the Upper Coliban River, which provide drinking water for many cities and towns on Djandak; in the highly urbanised and channelised Bendigo Creek, which receives, at times, highly polluted storm water from Bendigo streets; and the Avoca River, which is experiencing the effects of a drying climate and reduced, intermittent flow from the once flourishing waterway system.

Through AWAs, Djaara knowledge about caring for waterways is informing activities to heal Country through catchment management authorities. This is resulting in huge amounts of on-groundwork to remove invasive pest plants, restore native vegetation for habitat and fence off waterways to remove livestock that cause erosion and pollute the water.



Kapa Gatjin conducting an AWA at Leeds Reservoir in the Avoca catchment with staff and water agency partners.



## ENVIRONMENTAL WATER FOR LAKE BOORT

Yung Balug Clan has cared for the Boort Wetlands as part of a holistic cultural landscape for thousands of years. Yung Balug have always been the caretakers and Custodians of this land. The area holds ancient lore and presence that it a vital legacy for Yung Balug who still hold deep connection with the Boort landscape today.

With the support of Yung Balug, DJANDAK and DJAARA have previously been strong advocates in identifying and coordinating the need for water in Lake Boort.

Lake Boort continued to receive environmental water throughout 2022. Watering of the lake commenced in May 2022 and was completed later that year. High spring rainfall contributed, filling the lake to capacity in 2022. The lake had previously been dry for five years and the plants were in need of water to mature and reproduce. The watering of Lake Boort resulted in an immediate transformation with waterbirds that depend on wetlands systems flocking to the lake.

As the Boort wetland system is largely disconnected from the river system that once fed it, water must be artificially delivered by an irrigation channel. This is enabled through the environmental watering program on Djandak. Yung Balug and DJAARA hope to one day reconnect the lake to the natural flow path to further realise cultural benefits of delivering water to the lake.

With the shift of DJAARA having control over water at Lake Boort over time, it is important that there is a strong focus on taking back Yung Balug ownership which can later lead into further discussions for surrounding wetlands such as Lake Lyndger and Woolshed Swamp.

Ben Muir with NCCMA staff monitoring water quality.

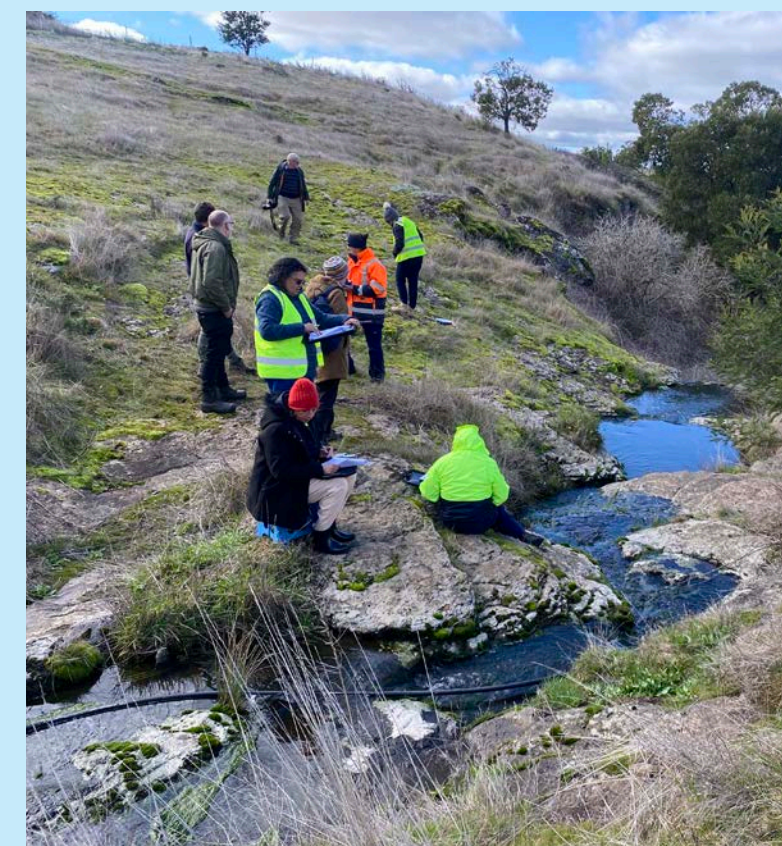


## MONITORING – LISTENING TO COUNTRY

Monitoring allows Djaara to listen to Country and be intimately connected to and respond to the needs for healing Country and waterways.

This year, we have assisted in hands-on monitoring through the regular testing of water on Bendigo Creek and the Upper Coliban catchment. We have also began monitoring of fish on Djandak and are developing a Spring fish monitoring program with Kapa Gatjin members alongside North Central Catchment Management Authority.

This helps us to build our mob's knowledge around how fish monitoring can be done, which will enable us to run our own Dja Dja Wurrung-led fish monitoring programs into the future.



Kapa Gatjin conducting an AWA.



# DJAARA WATER STRATEGY CALLS FOR CHANGE



DJAARA is calling for involvement in water management, and a share of water entitlements in the Djaara gatjin (water) strategy Dhelkunyangu Gatjin (‘working together to heal water’), released in June.

Dja Dja Wurrung People, the Traditional Owners of Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country), had been excluded from water management decisions, and access to water rights since colonisation.



***Our Ancestors looked after this Country and we are duty-bound to look after it for the next generation – including the water that falls on and flows through Country.***

Rodney Carter  
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

Since colonisation, management decisions have caused irreparable damage to our rivers, lakes and swamps. Dja Dja Wurrung People have been unable to fulfil our cultural obligations to care for waterways, because we have been excluded from participation in water management.

We have limited opportunities to contribute our lore and our knowledge to heal waterways.

We are also prevented from participation in the water economy.

This is despite DJAARA’s 2013 Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria, which acknowledges that Dja Dja Wurrung People, as Traditional Owners, are required to be included in the management of natural resources, including water.

The Djaara Gatjin Strategy provides a pathway for government water agencies to meet their obligations under the agreement and, more importantly, to improve water management and heal country.

DJAARA embraces the spirit of ngaldurrong (walking together) and the group looks forward to partnering with water agencies to implement Dhelkunyangu Gatjin.

Coliban Water Managing Director Damian Wells welcomed the Djaara Gatjin Strategy, noting that Coliban Water continues to embed Traditional Owner aspiration in its operations and major projects.



***This strategy sets a transformational direction toward water justice in central Victoria, and we welcome DJAARA’s leadership. We can find better ways to collectively heal Country and we will follow DJAARA’s lead.***

Damian Wells  
Coliban Water Managing Director



Damian Wells & Rodney Carter

In 2019, legislation was passed to enshrine Aboriginal cultural values and knowledge in water and catchment management into law, and to include Traditional Owners in these processes.

The Victorian Government’s Water is Life, a key deliverable from Victoria’s water plan, Water for Victoria (2016), sets out clear pathways to increase Traditional Owner resourcing for, and role in, the care and management of water landscapes.



L-R DJAARA Gatjin team’s Luke Wilson and Caitlin Dunolly-Lee with Minister for Water Harriet Shing, DJAARA General Manager Cassandra Lewis and Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Rodney Carter.



***I congratulate Dja Dja Wurrung on the release of the Gatjin Strategy and setting such a comprehensive vision for water on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. I look forward to working with DJAARA to see what we can achieve as we strengthen water management partnerships between Traditional Owners and the water sector, and the Gatjin Strategy sets out DJAARA’s clear expectations for how we can continue to progress this important work.***

Harriet Shing  
Victorian Water Minister

The Dja Dja Wurrung Gatjin Strategy is designed as an overarching strategy to sit alongside Water for Victoria to guide water management on Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

As part of the strategy, DJAARA plans to establish a Gatjin Authority to manage its water obligations, which would become an integral part of Victoria’s water framework.



DJANDAK:  
Ecology and biodiversity

Over the last year, the ecology group at DJANDAK has been growing our understanding of healing Country by focusing on noxious weeds, the worst weeds we have on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country).

Our noxious weed work focused on Buckrabanyule; the property recently purchased by Bush Heritage Australia with the aim of returning the land to Dja Dja Wurrung People. Buckrabanyule is a special place of vast cultural significance. Formed from a granite outcrop on the very edge of the Great Dividing Range, there are several steep, rocky ridges that rise out of the surrounding plains and a dry creek line running through the middle.

Over the past year, the ecology group has been treating the noxious weed Wheel Cactus, a spiky menace that has invaded almost the entire 600 hectares of the property. The cactus is so thick that most of the property is inaccessible.

We have successfully treated about 90 hectares of Wheel Cactus. A 10-year plan, which plots out the daunting task of treating all 600 hectares, has also just been drafted.

Our work is funded by grants from the Victorian Government, and we acknowledge their continuing support. This year saw the Victorian Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) change to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA). This changeover has not disrupted our relationship: we continue our regular catchups with the Department’s Biodiversity Division, and have secured funding for another two years of weed control works.



Aunty Marilyn Nicholls shows off some Brown-backed Wallaby-grass (*Rytidosperma duttonianum*) full of seed. Spear-grass (*Austrostipa aristiglumis*) is the tall grass on the left.

WORKING TOGETHER WITH BUSH HERITAGE  
TO HEAL COUNTRY

Djaara members of staff have been working closely with Bush Heritage to create a pathway for working together to heal Country at Buckrabanyule and the other Bush Heritage reserves on Djandak.

Bush Heritage welcomes Traditional Owners into any of their reserves. DJAARA Members wishing to visit Bush Heritage reserves should contact the Member Engagement team at DJAARA for details.

BIODIVERSITY AT BUCKRABANYULE

While tackling the cactus, we keep an eye out for who else might be on Country at Buckrabanyule. We’ve seen a population of kangaroos, a very busy echidna or two, and quite a few swamp wallabies (including one with a baby in her pouch). Birds of prey are often seen, and a Brown Treecreeper, a declining woodland bird, was using some of the few remaining tree hollows. We were also lucky enough to come across an Olive Legless Lizard (pictured).

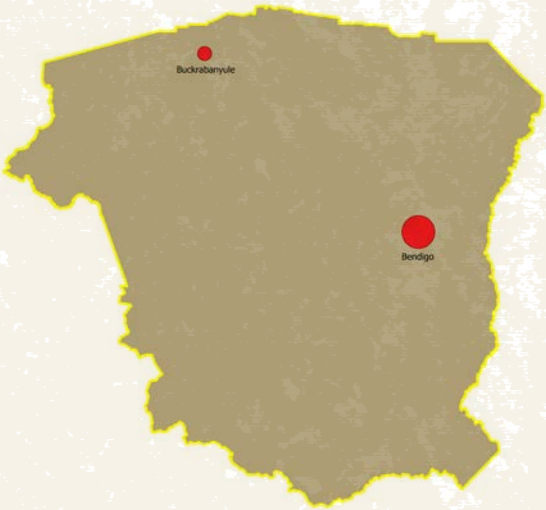
Despite the previous agricultural impacts, and a very thick forest of cactus, a decent amount of native grass can still be found around Buckrabanyule. Already we have not only identified several species of Spear-grass and Wallaby-grass but also fewer usual species like Brush Wire-grass and Paspalidium. We are also lucky to have a few large old Grey Box trees, remnants of what would have been a majestic Grey Box Grassy Woodland. With the return of Djandak Wi, the grasses should flourish and become healthy again, and hopefully the Grey Box will also start to regenerate.



Treated (dead) Wheel Cactus, with a wall of green, untreated Wheel Cactus on the ridge behind.



The sign says it all.



Buckrabanyule is in the northwest part of the RSA area.



Olive Legless Lizard (*Delma inornata*) at Buckrabanyule. The skin flap (the remnant of a back leg) is one feature that distinguishes it from a snake.



# Land Management

## BALAK KALIK MANYA (WALKING TOGETHER) PROJECT

Balak Kalik Manya (which means ‘Walking Together’) is a project connecting people with Country for the benefits it brings to both people and the planet. The importance of connecting with Country is well known by Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) and other Indigenous people. The relationship has been a fundamental part of our Culture for thousands of generations. It’s recognised as critical to both: thriving Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) supports thriving Djaara, and vice versa.



The team assesses a site for the Balak Kilik Manya project.

More recently, growing scientific evidence is backing this up. It shows that, when nature is a meaningful part of people’s lives, they tend to be happier and healthier, as well as more caring for the environment.

Balak Kalik Manya combines traditional Dja Dja Wurrung knowledge and practices with modern science to provide accessible, engaging,

and healthy natural spaces for people to connect to Country and tap into those benefits.

Sharing and promoting the similarities between traditional knowledge and modern science not only enhances the project, but it is a tangible way to help cultures walk together towards reconciliation.

Phase two of Balak Kalik Manya is focused on three sites on Djandak. Implementation is from 2022 to 2024 with support from Agnico Eagle’s Community Partnership Fund.

Background research, site identification and assessment, and engagement with DJAARA Members and other stakeholders has been a strong focus this year.



Engagement with DJAARA Members.

### Bundjiyl the Creator

In the beginning, there was nothing until **Bundjiyl the Creator** (a powerful Spirit Ancestor) created the land. **Bundjiyl** continues to provide guidance to **Djaara** (Dja Dja Wurrung People).

**Bundjiyl** made large boulders and put them in place and then covered them with dirt. He went back up into the sky and looking down he decided to create things that made the land beautiful. So, he created the plants – the trees, the bushes, the grasses, the flowers and the mosses.

He went back into the sky and decided to create things to move through the plants. So, he created the animals – **gurri** (Kangaroo), **barramal** (emu), **djulin** (tree goanna), **yulawil** (echidna), **ngur-ngur** (wombat) and **djirnap** (cockatoo). But he only made one of each animal, and each of those animals was huge.

Back in the sky, **Bundjiyl** noticed that the animals were not getting along with each other. He thought long and hard and called **gurri** over. He explained what he was going to do and performed a special Ceremony. Then he took out his stone axe and chopped **gurri** into smaller pieces. Each of those pieces turned into kangaroos, the size we have today. He did the same to all the other animals.

He went back into the sky and was very proud of what he had created. But he needed something to care for his creations. So he created people. He called all the people together and told them his rules. It is okay to take parts of plants to use, but don't kill the whole plant. It is okay to kill an animal as long as you perform Ceremony and you use all of the animal. It is important that you look after yourself and the other people around you, especially the Elders.

When **Bundjiyl** was satisfied with his work, he changed form into a Wedge Tailed Eagle and flew up into the sky to watch down on the Earth. Today he is still looking down through the eyes of the eagle and at night sits by his campfire in the sky, known today as Jupiter.

Feature artwork: "Bunjil" by Racquel Kerr, Djaara artist. Copyright © 2022. Reproduced with permission.

Corner artwork: "Movement" by Drew Berick, Djaara artist. Copyright © 2023.

Example of the Goldfields Track signage prepared by DJANDAK, to be installed in the coming year.

## ENHANCING VISITOR EXPERIENCE ALONG THE GOLDFIELDS TRACK

In one of our biggest projects to date, DJANDAK is developing significant new facilities to improve the experience for users of the Goldfields Track.

More than 70 interpretive signs have been designed for installation along the 210-kilometre trail, which runs through some spectacular and significant country between Bendigo and Bonan Youang (Mount Buninyong) on Wadawurrung Country.

Three new visitor nodes have also been designed for installation at Liyanganyuk Banyul (Mount Alexander), Bryden Road in Sedgwick and Nuggety Dam near Ballarat. Each will have a shelter, seating, and interpretative signage.

This project shares the stories of this region and its people. Many stories are focused on the Traditional Owners - in particular, Djaara as most of the track is on Djandak. The southernmost section of the trail is on the Country of the Wadawurrung People, who are also collaborating on the project.

The signs include a significant amount of traditional language, beautiful art and striking images. They will help to increase people’s understanding and appreciation of Dja Dja Wurrung and Wadawurrung Culture, and to re-establish both mobs’ rightful place in the landscape.

Installation of the new signage and visitor facilities is anticipated to be completed by the end of the 2023-24 financial year.



## DJANDAK: Forestry and fire program

This year, DJANDAK established a Forestry and Fire Program in January to support the goals of returning fire to Country, providing employment pathways for Dja Dja Wurrung People, and delivering contract forestry work on both private and public land.

The new team came about through DJAARA's persistent and professional engagement with Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic), and the employment and training of rangers. The Forestry and Fire team has increased DJANDAK's capacity to care for forests on Country and enabled DJAARA's cultural burning program on Djandak to scale up.



The team preparing for a cultural burn at Boort.

The team provides professional forestry services. Felling trees in DEECA-managed domestic wood collection areas supports community resilience with accessible free firewood. Constructing Strategic Complex Fuel Breaks enables safe passage for community in emergencies and allows emergency services to calm the rate of fire spread.

Our rangers give Djandak Wi to Country through a carefully planned process, monitoring Country and healing place. During DJAARA cultural



Pre-burn briefing.



Cultural burning in Boort.

events the Forestry and Fire team supports DJAARA Members with guidance and support to practice cultural burning.

Between January and June, DJANDAK's Forestry and Fire team have given Djandak Wi to Djandak on 24 occasions, constructed the Kimbolton SCFB, thinned the Sandon State Forest domestic firewood coup, worked alongside FFMVic to deliver fuel reduction burning in the Loddon Mallee and Midlands regions, and supported many more DJAARA-led programs.



The burn in progress.

## DJANDAK: Natural resource management works and construction crew

Our Natural Resource Management (NRM) Works and Construction crew are literally the heavy lifters across all our projects. You will see their work present in many stories and images we share in this document, as we achieve our goals for the year.

The crew continues to be integral to Dja Dja Wurrung landscaping, design, and action for shaping Djandak to reflect Dja Dja Wurrung Culture. Their work is a critical part of healing upside-down Country.



City of Great Bendigo engaged NRM crew for slashing works

Crew revegetation works at Lalgambuk (Mt Franklin) as part of the Connecting Country Program.



NRM crew engaged by DEECA to fence a contaminated area in White Hills.



Flood recovery project, which included woody weed removal and fencing reconstruction for a contract with Parks Victoria. NRM crew member Chris Sonneman operates the DJANDAK excavator doing the instream clean up.



Landscaping was undertaken by the DJANDAK NRM crew for the Bendigo District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC) landscaping project, which included kindergarten landscaping and constructing a cultural meeting place.





Joining the walking tour — uncovering the living culture of Dja Dja Wurrung People



Ngaldurrong Yana | Walk Together Dja Dja Wurrung Group Annual Report 2022-2023

## DUMAWUL

DUMAWUL, by DJAARA for Djaara, is a newly established creative arts and cultural tourism business in operation for just over a year.

DUMAWUL means 'thank you between two people, the giver and receiver of Culture, in good murrup (spirit)' in Dja Dja Wurrung language.

Since November 2021, we've grown from one staff member to seven - many of us First Nations.

DUMAWUL's mission is to create a culturally safe space for Dja Dja Wurrung People and all cultures who engage and trade with us. We actively support Dja Dja Wurrung creatives – artists, musicians, story tellers, cultural educators/facilitators, cultural tour guides, sculptors, artefact makers, wood burners and the like – in their self-determined pathway.

We are a for-profit business that puts 100% of tour profits directly back into the Dja Dja Wurrung community.

We support the business development values of courage, innovation, self-determination, and a connected community that focuses on cultural learning and practising and sharing culture.

We contribute towards the nine Dhelkunya Dja goals through our three focus areas:

- Education
- Cultural Tourism
- Creative Arts

DUMAWUL is growing, and looking for DJAARA Members who would like to grow with us. Members can become part of a growing network of Dja Dja Wurrung artists, tourism product makers, tour guides and facilitators.

To all Dja Dja Wurrung artists, we'd love to hear about you and your creative art and business development goals.

Email us at [dumawul@djadjawurrung.com.au](mailto:dumawul@djadjawurrung.com.au)  
Or check us out at <https://dumawul.com.au>



## DUMAWUL achievements

- **Djaara-led Cultural Competency Program** development and delivery, July 2022 – ongoing. More than 40 sessions were delivered this year to 800+ participants. More than \$50,000 was returned directly to Djaara facilitators.
- **Accelerator Program** launch and delivery, July 2022 – ongoing. Business development and mentoring program for Djaara members, run in partnership with the Killara Foundation
- **DUMAWUL official launch** celebration, Capital Theatre Bendigo November 2022. Djaara art exhibition, dance performance and night market and celebration dinner.
- **Inaugural Malamiya Mang Arts Festival**, April 2023. Art exhibition, Dudley House, night market, workshops, and Cultural tours.
- **Djaara Cultural Tourism launch:** Ulumbarra walking tour Bendigo CBD, Kooyoora National Park half day Cultural Heritage tour.
- **Djaara Tour Guide Pathway Program** — program development, recruitment, and training of 12 Djaara Cultural Facilitators.
- **DUMAWUL inaugural Art Producer program**, July 2022 – ongoing. Commissioning of Djaara art resulted in more than \$45,000 paid directly to Djaara artists.
- **Djaara online learning platform** development and launch. Djaara Members can complete learning modules about Djandak Wi, DJAARA's Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the state government, and Cultural tour guide training and facilitation.
- Hosted two conferences for Court Services Victoria Conferences – these included five days on Djandak led by Djaara facilitators.
- Hosted Cultural Immersion Experiences on Djandak for Bendigo Adelaide Bank Executive Team and Board.
- **Djaara Creative Arts & Cultural Tourism Hub** — successful grant application for establishment of hub in Bendigo's Hargreaves Mall.
- **Website and tour booking page** development and launch in partnership with Bendigo Tourism Board. <https://dumawul.com.au>
- **DUMAWUL staff and tour guide development program** — attended Visit Victoria Annual Tourism Conference, Gunditjmara Budj Bim and Taungurung Wawa Bik cultural tours, and the Campaspe Tourism and Economic Development Summit.



Scan this QR code to learn more about Dumawul



Experience the Ulumbarra Bendigo CBD Walking Tour.

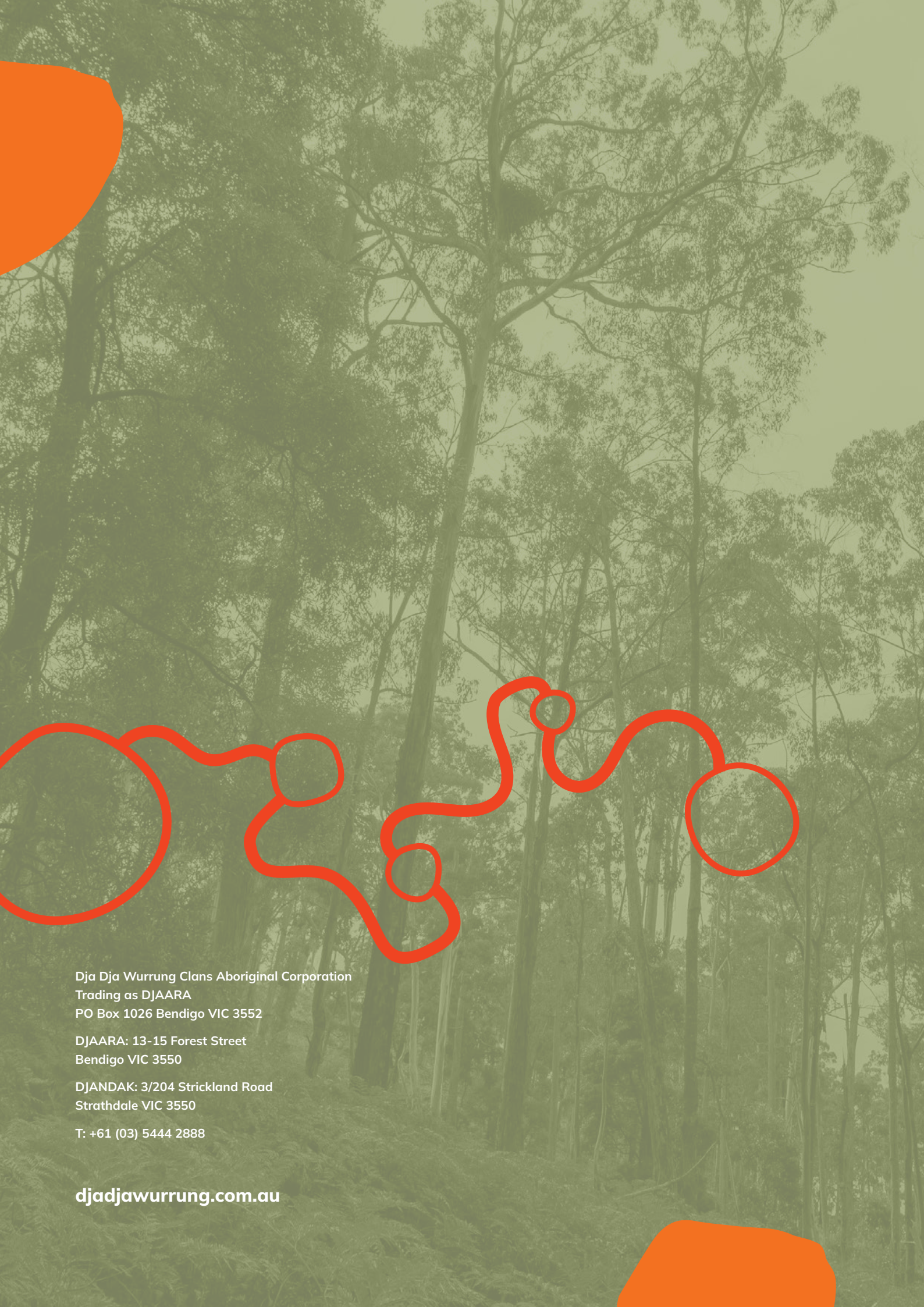
Djaara guides, on Country.











Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation  
Trading as DJAARA  
PO Box 1026 Bendigo VIC 3552

DJAARA: 13-15 Forest Street  
Bendigo VIC 3550

DJANDAK: 3/204 Strickland Road  
Strathdale VIC 3550

T: +61 (03) 5444 2888

[djadjawurrung.com.au](http://djadjawurrung.com.au)