

NGALDURRONG YANA | WALK TOGETHER

Annual Report

2023–2024





Published by the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation,
trading as DJAARA (ICN: 4421)

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Photo credits:

Front cover – Cassandra Lewis and Rebecca Phillips at the
Bakaru Wayaparrangu signing ceremony, 2024.

Inside cover – Dja Dja Wurrung Elder, Auntie Monica Phillips
at Yapenya 2023.

Inside back cover – Dja Dja Wurrung Elder, Uncle Rick Nelson
at Kooyoora 2023.

To learn more, see the
extended web version
of the Annual Report by
scanning this QR code.



“ *It warms my heart and my soul that
I can be here and share with my
younger generation. We're just so
proud that we can be here and
represent ourselves and bring our
culture to the wider people.* **”**

**Aunty Monica Phillips
(at the Bendigo Easter Parade)
Dja Dja Wurrung Elder**



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Djali

Dja Dja Wurrung Language

Our language is important to us in so many ways.

Language keeps us connected to our People, Country, community and Culture. Djali (Dja Dja Wurrung language) is our foundation. We speak today, more than ever, as it bayakina (reawakens). We share Djali to instil it across Country through the land, rivers, trees, and People. The djali on this page is a reference to the djali that appears throughout this report.

Djali	Meaning	Djali	Meaning
Bakaru Wayaparrangu	in the middle, we all meet	Djuwima Djandaki	to show and to share our Country
Balaki Wuka	we are giving to community	Dumawul	Thank you between two people, the giver and the receiver of Culture, in good spirit
Balaki Wurrekang	Talking to Community, talking to the mob	garingilang gatjin wii	garden of water and fire
bayakina	reawakens/reawakening	Gatjin	Water
Dhelkup Murrupuk	give good spirit	Gutjun Bulok	Tang Tang Swamp
Dhelkunya Dja	Healing Country	Larni Yirrip	Home or place of ironbark tree
Dhelkunyangu Gatjin	Working together to heal water	Martinga guli	Ancestors
Dhelkunya Wi	healing fire	Ngaldurrong Yana	walk together
Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu	we say yes to each other	Nyaka Dja	To See Country
Djaa Walatjalang	Love of Country	Nyauwi Mutjeka	to keep the sun
Djaara	Dja Dja Wurrung People	Nyerna Djayi Wurreka	Listening to Country talking
Djakitj	Dining room	Wanggal	a cluster of cumbungi working together to stabilise the bank of a river
Djali	Dja Dja Wurrung language	Wartaka	Come with purpose, welcome
Djali Balak	tongue/language, mob/People/ group	Yapenya	To dance, to celebrate
Djandak	Dja Dja Wurrung Country	Yilingga Marna	shake hands
Djandak Wi	Country Fire		
Djuwang Baring	Long trail (the name given to Creswick Trails)		

Other frequently used words

While we find ways to embed Dja Dja Wurrung language across all that we do, we also have some spelling conventions and expressions that are frequently used.

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 the first time the word appears. Then the word appears in language throughout the document.

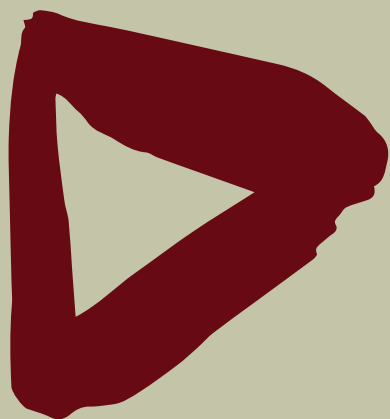
Corporation frequently appears throughout this document and is interchangeable with DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation).

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 and 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 and DJAKITJ throughout this document.



Our Story

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

Our Culture has survived the challenges of time. Our Ancestors persevered to ensure our survival. Today, we are determined to continue their work.

DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation) is the representative body for Dja Dja Wurrung People. Balaki Wuka, we are giving to community.

2004

The Corporation is established to: promote the health and wellbeing of Dja Dja Wurrung People (Djaara), and to protect and promote the laws, culture, property rights and human rights of Djaara.

2008

Through the Corporation, Dja Dja Wurrung People gain Registered Aboriginal Party status. This recognition as the Traditional Owners of Djandak ensures Djaara are involved and will fight to have control of all aspects and impacts of Cultural Heritage on Country.

2013

The Corporation – on behalf of Dja Dja Wurrung People – and the Victorian Government sign the Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement. The Agreement is a means by which Dja Dja Wurrung tradition and the unique relationship of Djaara to Djandak is recognised, strengthened, protected, and promoted, for the benefit of all Victorians, now and into the future.

2014

Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Pty Ltd commences trading as DJANDAK.

2021

The Corporation pays respect to our People and begins trading as DJAARA - Balaki Wuka (Giving to community).

2022

Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Pty Ltd launches DUMAWUL to support Djaara Enterprises operating in arts, education and tourism.

2023

DJAKITJ launches. The food and fibre business is the third Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprise.

TODAY

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

The Group strives to be thriving and sustainable, with established interests across the Clans' traditional areas that are culturally, environmentally, and economically beneficial for Djaara and the wider community.

Our Aspirations

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

Our 20 year Country Plan sets out the community vision:

- Our People's health and wellbeing is strong and underpinned by our living Culture
- Our lands and waters are healthy and actively managed to protect our values, laws, Culture and rights
- We are politically empowered and manage our affairs from a strong and diverse economic base.

These goals give purpose to all our work. DJAARA delivers a range of programs to meet these aspirations, and has developed a suite of strategies detailing each program area's objectives.

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



Rivers & Waterways



Cultural Practices & Customs



**Malamiya
(Cultural Heritage)**



**Bushtucker
& Medicine**



Djaara



Land



Self-Determination



**Traditional
Owner Economy**



**Galkangu
(Joint Management)**

DJAARA Organisational Structure



A message from the Chair

Rebecca Phillips



Wukan Dhelkek Djayi, Djaara, ba Marti Guli ba Marti Gurrk. I give my respect to our Country, our People and our Ancestors.

As elected Chairperson I have had to learn fast, our Corporation is doing so much. We should all be proud of what has been achieved over the years.

The DDWCAC Board continues to advocate for DJAARA Members' rights to make decisions for Country, practise our Culture, and empower our People. We are reviewing our policies and governance documents, and up-skilling to improve our representation and directorship. Currently, nine Djaara Apical Ancestors are represented on the Board and we encourage people of the unrepresented Ancestors to join us.

Our Board is committed to furthering DJAARA's objectives, that the Djaara voice is strong, our People are happy and healthy, our Country is cared for and respected by all who call Djandak, home. It's deadly seeing our membership grow and sharing what's important for the Board to work towards in strategic vision, planning and governance.

I commend the Mining subcommittee on their negotiations of our historic mining agreement with Agnico Eagle. This will enable environmental oversight and collaboration on restorative works. The Board is considering how other benefits can enable our People to heal and self-determine better futures for ourselves and our future generations.

I acknowledge outgoing Chair Trent Nelson for his important contribution over many years, through an extended period of strong growth from 2015/16 to Nov 2023. I'd also like to acknowledge and thank the outgoing directors Uncle Graham Atkinson, Uncle Walter Harrison, and Peta Hudson.

Over those years, the DDWCAC Board:

- negotiated the handback of land for our new corporate home
- steered decisions for works on Djandak, including Bendigo TAFE, Law Courts and Galkangu – Bendigo GovHub
- established two new enterprises – DUMAWUL and DJAKITJ
- celebrated 10 years of our Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State.

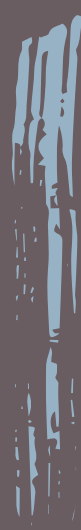
I'd like to thank our active Members and Wartakas who help shape DJAARA's voice in our cultural business, our current Board for upholding responsible duties of directorship, and our DDW Group staff who work hard to ensure our members are involved and updated in the delivery of our Country Plan aspirations, business operations, projects and programs.

We will meet our future challenges head on and celebrate our achievements together.

Dumarr,

Rebecca Phillips
Chairperson

Our Board of Directors



Our Board is responsible for the governance of the Corporation. The Board sets the 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.

There are 18 family groups, descendants of our Martinga guli (Ancestors), specified in the DDWCAC Rule Book. Each family group may elect a Director and an Alternate Director to the Board. Each Board member nominee must be a member of the Corporation and of the family group that nominated them. While members may choose to be recognised as having affiliation with any number of the Martinga guli, they can identify with only one ancestral family group for directorship and voting purposes.

Board Development Sessions were held throughout the year to support Directors and Alternate Directors. The workshop-format sessions cover a range of topics, including governance and finance. They aim to support Directors to carry out their varied governance and compliance duties.

Through their work on the Board on behalf of their family groups and all Djaara, Directors and Alternate Directors make a vital contribution to the achievement of the aspirations set out in the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan. Their involvement and dedication are greatly appreciated.

Governance Structure and Accountabilities

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, 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.

Board Meetings

A total of 11 monthly Board meetings were held during the year, with the Annual General Meeting held in November 2023.

- During 2023-24 the Board continued to utilise online platforms to meet virtually and access meeting papers.
- 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 Reports provide updates on activities across the Dja Dja Wurrung Group. All activities can be placed against achieving outcomes of the Dhelkunya Dja Plan 2014–2034.
- 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.
- The Board receives reports from the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board, and other committees and groups on which there are Dja Dja Wurrung representatives. Communiques from organisations including the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (VTOFL) are also provided for noting.



Rebecca (Bec) Phillips

Chairperson

Director, Malcolm Family Group



Michael (Mick) Bourke

Deputy Chairperson

Director, Nelson Family Group



Mel Peters

Director, Davis Family Group



Amanda Power

Alternate Director,
Malcolm Family Group



Uncle Rick Nelson

Alternate Director,
Nelson Family Group



Auntie Sue Charles

Director, Charles Family Group



Deb Dunolly

Director, Dunolly Family Group



Kayla Baksh

Alternate Director,
Dunolly Family Group



Lisa Thorpe

Alternate Director,
Charles Family Group



Boadan Kerr

Director, Kerr Family Group



Neil Morris

Alternate Director, King Girribong,
Lerimburneen, Walpanumin
Family Group



Belinda Duarte

Director, Robinson Family Group



Andrew Travis

Director, King Girribong,
Lerimburneen, Walpanumin
Family Group

Board Membership as at 30 June 2024

A message from our Group CEO **Rodney Carter**



November 2023 was particularly significant and special as we celebrated the 10th anniversary of our Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) with the State of Victoria.

Since signing our RSA, DJAARA has evolved into a mature corporate entity. The strong governance structures we established as a young, small corporation have allowed us to grow and develop sustainably. Today, the Dja Dja Wurrung Group has more than 200 employees. Through the RSA and our strategies we are expanding our sphere of operations and our influence.

In March, the DUMAWUL Cultural Tourism and Creative Arts Hub opened in Bendigo's Hargreaves Mall. In June, DJANDAK was recognised for its cutting-edge work supporting our Members to embed Djaara values into design projects. We're increasingly visible on Djandak including in major civic buildings, signage and landscaping.

In May, we released our Djandak Wi (Country Fire) Strategy Dhelkunya Wi, which means 'healing fire', towards the end of our biggest and most successful Djandak Wi season to date. It's the fifth in our suite of strategies that build on the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan.

Another historic step for DJAARA was negotiating a Victorian-first agreement with Canadian mining company Agnico Eagle, operator of the Fosterville Gold Mine. Through the agreement, Bakarlu Wayaparrangu ('in the middle, we all meet'), DJAARA will be able to speak for Country, and will have an independent income stream to further our goals and aspirations. I commend the strength and persistence of our Board's negotiating subcommittee, and the support from staff, in achieving this significant outcome.

I am deeply grateful for the exceptional leadership of our Corporation and Enterprise Boards, the guidance and commitment of our Members, and the dedication of our staff. It is through you all that we can achieve so much. I would also like to mention the significant achievement of our own Cassandra Lewis. Her commitment to us, as a People and our community, is inspiring.

In closing, let us not forget our loved ones who passed this year. They have now become one of the many Ancestors that have left us beautiful memories and a legacy for our children to build upon.

Dhelkup Murrupuk (give good spirit).

Rodney Carter
Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

A message from our DJAARA General Manager **Cassandra Lewis**



A highlight of this year was reflecting on how far we've come in the last 10 years, together with many of our Members who joined the celebrations around our RSA.

This year, DJAARA Membership increased again, to 540. We have more staff in the Balaki Wurrekang (Member engagement) team, and we're proud to have hosted more Member events.

Our priority to support Dja Dja Wurrung People's career development and to gain employment with the Dja Dja Wurrung Group has been realised through traineeships, personal support from our staff, and leadership opportunities.

I am proud and excited about the progress towards our Corporate and Community Centre, which will be our permanent home. Having our own Djaara space for our work and our Members is a symbolic and hugely practical step towards Dja Dja Wurrung self-determination.

As the corporation continues to grow rapidly, we are implementing new, sophisticated business systems. They represent a significant investment in the future of our organisation and will enable the corporation to stay strong and successful as a large corporation.

The negotiation of an agreement, Bakaru Wayaparrangu ('in the middle we all meet'), with mining company Agnico Eagle is testament to the corporation's maturity and negotiating prowess. Through Bakaru Wayaparrangu we are enabling the Djaara community, and the wider regional community, to benefit from the gold extracted on Djandak.

As always, we continue to lead on Country, building strong partnerships and relationships, and pursuing our rights under the RSA.

I want to thank our Members and our staff for their passion and commitment to Djaara aspirations.

Cassandra Lewis
General Manager – Corporation

Balaki Wurrekang

Member Engagement

DJAARA's main 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.

Dja Dja Wurrung community members are undoubtedly the most important element of the work the Member Engagement team undertakes. Under our Dhelkunya Dja (Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan), our team aims to deliver on the first goal: to support every Dja Dja Wurrung person to achieve their version of happiness, being healthy, and being secure in their identity, livelihood and lifestyle.

Our Members – Dja Dja Wurrung People – are direct descendants of the First Peoples of this land. We recognise all of the Clan groups, the descendants of our Apical Ancestors. Some of us are living on Country and some are living away. We are all Dja Dja Wurrung. We in the Member Engagement team are charged with ensuring all our Members have opportunity to engage in the spiritual, cultural, social and emotional wellbeing of our People, both current and future, to achieve our goal.

Member Engagement strengthens our Members' pathways to self-determination by providing opportunities for our Members to gather together, to share our Culture, and by supporting Members in every element of our Community Support Program.

Member Engagement is the conduit between our membership and the Dja Dja Wurrung Group. We link Members with the staff at DJAARA and its enterprises in their decision-making. Indirectly, the team supports meaningful engagement between DJAARA, government and other stakeholders to implement our goals and strategies, as well as the services Djaara provide.

Engaging our Members

The Member Engagement team aims to:

- develop and deliver Cultural events
- develop and deliver corporate events inclusive of our membership
- reduce major risk factors for our membership and ensure there is access to appropriate health services and housing
- broker opportunities for Dja Dja Wurrung Members to reinvest spirit, traditional cultural practice and to confidently enact their rights and interests within the landscape
- encourage and support members to work on Country and in stable employment as part of our principles of self-determination.

Dja Dja Wurrung community support

Member Engagement team administers one of the most important programs for our mob in the Community Support Program. This program supports the Dhelkunya Dja (Country Plan) Number-1 Goal, Djaara, by removing financial barriers



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

“As a Member, [I think] the Member Engagement team staff members of Hannah Dunolly-Lee and Jenni Chaloner supported Members to have a greater connection to our Country.”

**– Aunty Linda Ford
Dja Dja Wurrung Elder**

for Members. 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 education
- 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 needs basis and the guidelines limit allocations per year.

Support Program funding provided in 2023/24

Community Support Program Summary		
Funding Stream	Amount	Increase on 2022-23 FY
Driver's Licence	\$1,837.33	59%
Elders Celebration	\$1,000.00	131%
Elite Sports	\$0.00	
Family Gathering	\$743.73	
Healthy Living	\$1,499.94	118%
Micro Business	\$2,000.00	
Moving Back to Country	\$12,953.30	24%
Sorry Business	\$85,953.54	100%
Primary School	\$6,166.68	144%
Secondary School	\$7,858.93	150%
Tertiary Education	\$2,974.95	208%
Total	\$122,988.40	122%

At June 2024, DJAARA had 540 Members, who were from the following family groups:

Charles	92
Curr	21
Davis	33
Dunolly	23
Harrison	48
Jackson	4
Kerr	53
King Girribong Lerimburneen Walpanumin	39
Malcolm	57
Nelson	106
Robinson	35
Terrick	26
No Family Groups	3
Total	540

Balaki Wurrekang Events

Our Member Engagement Team develops and delivers a range of cultural events, bringing our Members together throughout the year to forge greater connection. Events this year included a DJAARA Family Day, Welcome Baby to Country, Wirama Shield football and netball matches, Charlton Cup, Women's cultural camp, leading the Bendigo Easter Parade, Dja Dja Wurrung dance sessions, and Dja Dja Wurrung adornment sessions.

In line with the 2023 NAIDOC Week theme 'For Our Elders', Member Engagement supported our Elders with a day of indulgent pampering to provide a little bit of wellbeing support especially 'for our Elders' who participated.

Bendigo Easter Parade

“ I enjoy coming together, sharing NAIDOC celebrations with our Dja Dja Wurrung family.”

**– Aunty Linda Ford
Dja Dja Wurrung Elder**



Welcoming babies to Country

This year DJAARA welcomed more than 160 babies to Country at two events in July and November. In partnership with Bendigo Health, these events attract a large number of Djaara Elders, Djaara families and members of the broader community.

Welcome Baby to Country ceremonies are for babies (aged up to 36 months) born on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Both Dja Dja Wurrung and non-Indigenous babies have participated in this very special Welcome ceremony.

Aunty Ros Dodson said the ceremony honours and acknowledges Djaara babies and those infants born on Djaara Country, and their connection to the lands on which they are born – in keeping with Dja Dja Wurrung tradition.

“For our People, the smoking ceremony and traditional Welcome offers wellbeing and protection and connects baby to Country. In passing our traditions on to a new generation, we are upholding our Cultural obligations.”



“ We thank Brittney Hawkes for the support and leadership provided to our team during the 2023/2024 financial year. We wish Brittney the very best in her new venture as an entrepreneur.”

– Member Engagement Team

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.

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 in which it belongs.

Today, Dja Dja Wurrung language is present and used daily – see Djali, page 6. 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 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.

Djali Balak (tongue/language, mob/People/group)

Djali Balak is our language subcommittee of the DJAARA Board. They review language requests, provide advice and approve pronunciation of new researched words.

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

The team received 94 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 requests

Djali Balak continues to receive many requests for use of Dja Dja Wurrung language 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.

Language Requests Over Time

Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
Requests	41	71	143	125	94



Larni Barramul Yaluk – new name speaks to Country

The renaming of Jim Crow Creek to Larni Barramul Yaluk in May 2023 recognises and honours Dja Dja Wurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the region and honours our connection to the landscape – and our language.

“The former name memorialised a sorry chapter in our shared history. It was offensive to my people, and I think, to others. That name meant this creek was not a culturally safe place for Dja Dja Wurrung and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People,” said Rodney Carter.

“Bringing a Dja Dja Wurrung presence back to Country is significant for Dja Dja Wurrung People’s health and wellbeing. We are also pleased to share our language and heritage with the wider community. “Larni Barramal Yaluk means ‘the creek that flows through the home or dreaming place of the emu.’”

Malamiya

The Malamiya (Cultural Heritage) team's focus is to protect, preserve, and promote Djaara Cultural Heritage. This includes tangible heritage – such as culturally important trees, landscapes, and artefacts on Djandak – and the intangible heritage, including the stories, ceremonies, dance, and art of Djaara.

Through the provisions set out in the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Victoria) the Malamiya team:

- Consults with heritage advisors and project sponsors on the development of Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) to avoid or minimise harm to Cultural Heritage. The team evaluates CHMPs and has the right to either approve or refuse them.
- Has the authority to issue Cultural Heritage Permits for carrying out a range of activities that affect Djaara Cultural Heritage. These include: permission to conduct research on Djandak, harming Aboriginal Cultural Heritage, and activities that involve the sale of artefacts, and the transfer of heritage outside of Victoria.
- Can negotiate agreements with landholders around the protection of cultural places. These agreements may contain conditions that set out protection measures and may also include access rights for Djaara to visit these places.
- Provides advice to relevant government ministers around Cultural Heritage and planning schemes.
- Requests protection orders for places on Djandak.

The team also works in other ways to protect heritage:

- Working on Djandak to identify, record and register Cultural Heritage.
- Engaging with community groups and government agencies to improve their understanding of Djaara heritage and the Act.



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

A large, expressive orange brushstroke graphic in the top right corner, resembling a stylized 'W' or a series of connected, sweeping lines.

Highlights

The Malamiya team coordinated and worked with others in the Dja Dja Wurrung Group to host the **Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) Forum** over three days in March, 2024. Representatives from each RAP gathered to share knowledge of what works well and how we can work better in carrying out legislative functions and in protection and management.

Participants enjoyed visiting the DUMAWUL Hub exhibition space and a tour through central Bendigo where Djaara artists Rebecca Phillips and Troy Firebrace showed off the city's Djaara-fied spaces. The forum included an introduction to the Strategic Aboriginal Heritage Assessments pilot project and discussion about Cultural Heritage in the media.

Along with our statutory obligations regarding Cultural Heritage, members of the team have been heavily involved in several projects across the year that align with our goals. These include:

- Providing Djaara input to the **Victorian Goldfields World Heritage bid**, working to ensure that the Aboriginal perspectives on the period are represented.
- Carrying out the **Strategic Aboriginal Heritage Assessment** on Djandak. This is a government-funded pilot project to map the significant cultural landscapes on Country to provide input to future planning schemes. Early identification of these areas will allow planners to avoid areas of high cultural significance to Djaara before committing to development of areas. This project will conclude in the last half of 2024.
- Securing funding for, and commencing, a **study of cultural places that may have suffered damage during recent flood events**. The study will not only provide an indication of the damage that may have occurred but will allow for the development of protective measures to mitigate the effect of future flooding.
- The team coordinates ceremonial events such as Smoking Ceremonies and Welcomes to Country, as well as didgeridoo performances. These activities support and promote Dja Dja Wurrung cultural practices. This year, **the team coordinated 489 cultural bookings**. These ranged from major government-led events to private ceremonies for families who recently moved onto Country.

Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu

Recognition and Settlement Agreement Implementation Team

Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu means ‘we say yes to each other’ in Djali (Dja Dja Wurrung language). It is a beautiful picture of the power of agreement making.

It is a fitting name for the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) Implementation Team. Although many of our team are legally trained, we know the most meaningful outcomes occur when we help others to embrace Dja Dja Wurrung People’s vision and respect their rights (as articulated in the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan and Recognition and Settlement Agreement) rather than resorting to legal pathways.

To do this, we:

- meet with key leaders within government, openly and respectfully advising how their office can improve in embracing and implementing Djaara vision and support/uphold Djaara rights
- provide legal and strategic advice internally to the Dja Dja Wurrung Group, workshopping creative and holistic solutions to overcome barriers to implementing Djaara vision and rights
- meet with members of private industry and invite them to partner with Djaara’s vision and rights
- implement the legal rights of Djaara contained within the RSA, by:
 - conducting negotiations and advising of Djaara’s right to receive compensation under the Land Use Activity Agreement (LUAA), which is part of the RSA
 - providing written responses to notices of proposed activities on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country)
 - advocating for law reform and changes to the RSA by direct negotiation with government
 - conducting educational workshops to increase government respect for Djaara legal rights
- identify, investigate and seek redress for breaches of Djaara legal rights
- secure voluntary agreement to advance Djaara rights over and above what is required in the RSA.

We stand on the shoulders of historic Djaara agreement makers, some of whom negotiated the first comprehensive RSA in Victoria. We ensure that their words are respected and abided by, in this generation and the generations to come.

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



Advancing Rights

The team has made some breakthroughs this year in negotiating for activities under the LUAA. For the first time, the team negotiated the use of the new 'Interim Community Benefits Formulae' that substantially increases the rate of compensation where the State undertakes an activity on Crown land on Djandak. Also for the first time, the team negotiated a substantial penalty for an activity that occurred in breach of the LUAA, impacting on Djaara rights prior to agreement with DJAARA.

LUAA Negotiation Outcomes

The team has secured positive outcomes that create opportunities for Djaara, share Djaara Culture and increase Djaara presence on Djandak. These include:

- reintroducing Djali through naming of public and private projects across Djandak, from a new park to a new early learning and childcare centre in Eaglehawk
- Djaara-fying new public and private projects by creating opportunities to incorporate Djaara art and design
- Securing one new employment position for a Djaara Community Support Officer for a period of 3 years
- Djaara access to trees that must be removed from a construction site for a new facility. The trees can be honoured by Djaara deciding how the timber may be used.

Since colonisation, others have taken ownership of and grown wealthy from Djandak whilst Djaara were increasingly denied access to land and resources. Today, Djaara have rights over only a small portion of Djandak. It is vital that Djaara receive full and proper compensation resulting in the greatest possible benefit to the Djaara community for any further loss to their rights.

The increase in monetary community benefits has been ongoing since 2020/2021 when DJAARA began to implement the *Griffiths* or *Timber Creek* High Court Decision. This increase does not include (and is in addition to) the increase in non-monetary community benefits such as naming and employment opportunities.



Djuwang Baring – Long Trail (formerly known as Creswick Trails)

The Djuwang Baring project in Creswick is a 60km network of mountain bike trails, comprising 70 trail segments. Djuwang Baring means 'long trail' in Djali (Dja Dja Wurrung language). The project provided a unique opportunity to reintroduce Djali through naming of 50% of the trail segments, sharing of Culture through delivering traditional ceremonies at the partial-opening event, and the opportunity for a substantial contract for the design, manufacture and installation of signage for DJANDAK. DJAARA also successfully negotiated three new roles for Djaara at Hepburn Shire Council which are currently being developed.



Artist: Nukara Nicholls Moore

Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu

(continued from previous page)

Mining Conference November 2023

The Dja Dja Wurrekatjalangu team has worked very hard and successfully to cultivate relationships with miners, explorers, prospectors and tenement managers. The team hosted a mining conference on Djandak, with more than 40 participants, most of whom were local to Djandak.

The conference brought together representatives from DJAARA, miners and explorers, and the Earth Resources Regulator to improve the industry's understanding of Djaara values and perspectives, Djaara rights, and industry obligations. As a result of the team working to create better relationships in this industry, including through hosting the conference, DJAARA has been able to recoup outstanding mining debts of close to \$200,000 through our Debt Recovery Program.

The response from participants was positive, with so many in the mining industry pleased at the initiative shown by DJAARA and mending many fences between the mining industry and traditional owners. Feedback included comments such as 'very impressed', 'knowledgeable speakers', and 'I enjoyed meeting the team'.

Yilingga Marna

Yilingga Marna, meaning 'shake hands', marks a significant partnership between DJAARA and the City of Greater Bendigo. This agreement upholds the legal rights of Dja Dja Wurrung People while fostering positive outcomes for the entire community.

Yilingga Marna establishes a concrete framework for robust engagement between DJAARA and the City, embedding self-determination for Djaara in City-led initiatives.

In the past 12 months of the agreement 10 projects have been facilitated under the agreement. This includes six carry-over projects and four new projects, with economic benefits at a percentage of the project expenditure.

Yilingga Marna Implementation is entering into its second year of practical application. Some of the outcomes from the Yilingga Marna agreement during 2023/24 are as follows:

- Training was delivered to the City of Greater Bendigo (CoGB) on Cultural Heritage Requirements under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic) and the Aboriginal Heritage Regulations 2018 (Vic).
- A list of new CoGB projects was developed. This list will enable DJAARA to review future opportunities that can be delivered through the Yilingga Marna agreement. It will assist DJAARA to forward plan and fully realise the community benefits and increased opportunities for enterprise.

- CoGB agreed to the Dja Dja Wurrung Group receiving early notification and opportunity to review CoGB policies and strategies, to provide more opportunities to embed Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan aspirations, actions towards self-determination, and Djaara rights (as outlined in the Recognition and Settlement Agreement) within these strategies and policies.



Bendigo Airport welcome sign at arrivals.

- DJANDAK, DUMAWUL and DJAARA continue to have opportunity to deliver outcomes on Djandak with the CoGB via the Yilingga Marna agreement and associated enhanced partnerships. These opportunities include: increased native landscaping, place naming, interpretative signage including language, design and maintenance works.
- The CoGB provides financial assistance for Djaara to pursue education and job-ready initiatives.



Future civic heart of Strathfieldsaye – the Strathfieldsaye Town Centre incorporates Djaara design elements. (Photo CoGB)

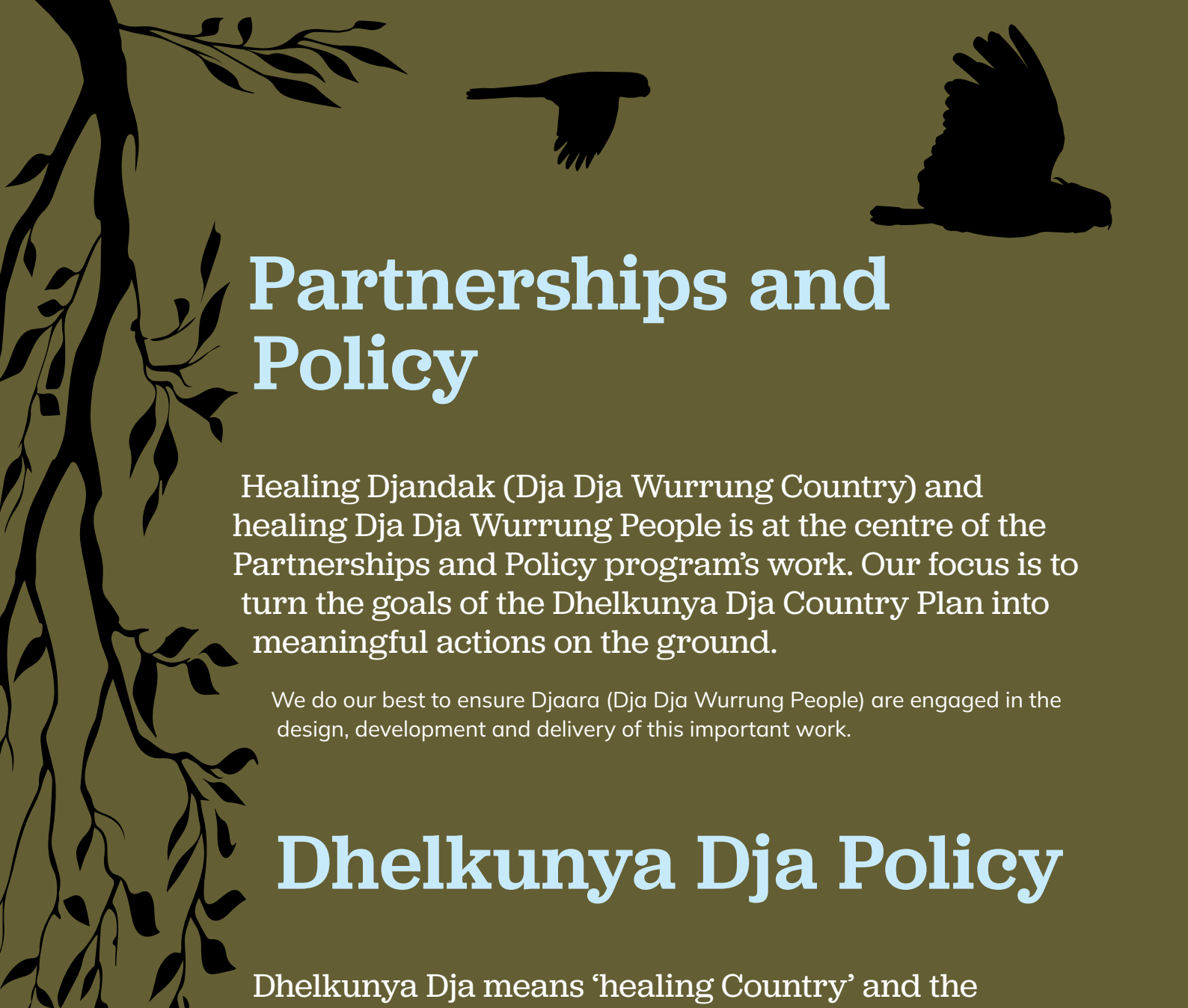
City of Greater Bendigo staff and DJAARA's Yilingga Marna Project Officer visited sites on the Yilingga Marna project list, including the Strathfieldsaye Town Centre, which will incorporate Djaara design elements in paving, native plantings, bird-attracting shrubs and grasses, and language.

The incorporation of Dja Dja Wurrung language and place naming in public spaces throughout the City of Greater Bendigo aligns with Djaara cultural, economic and social aspirations, as highlighted in the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan. The initiatives, developing through increased partnership with the City, reinforce cultural identity, create economic opportunities, enhance social wellbeing, and are creating a welcoming environment for Djaara to return to Country. Increased opportunities for community and visitor education are occurring through interpretative signage and sharing of cultural knowledge.

While not all CoGB projects fall under the Yilingga Marna agreement, the strengthened partnership between the City and DJAARA and its enterprises through Yilingga Marna has brought about positive outcomes on other projects as well. An example is the incorporation of the cultural welcome and landscaped pathway walk at Bendigo Airport.

DJAARA and the City of Greater Bendigo continue to develop actions and processes relating to the Yilingga Marna Agreement including working through challenges and resolving matters in the spirit of the agreement.





Partnerships and Policy

Healing Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) and healing Dja Dja Wurrung People is at the centre of the Partnerships and Policy program's work. Our focus is to turn the goals of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan into meaningful actions on the ground.

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

Dhelkunya Dja Policy

Dhelkunya Dja means 'healing Country' and the Dhelkunya Dja Policy team is a dynamic and dedicated group of staff committed to healing Djandak, healing our climate, and advancing the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan.

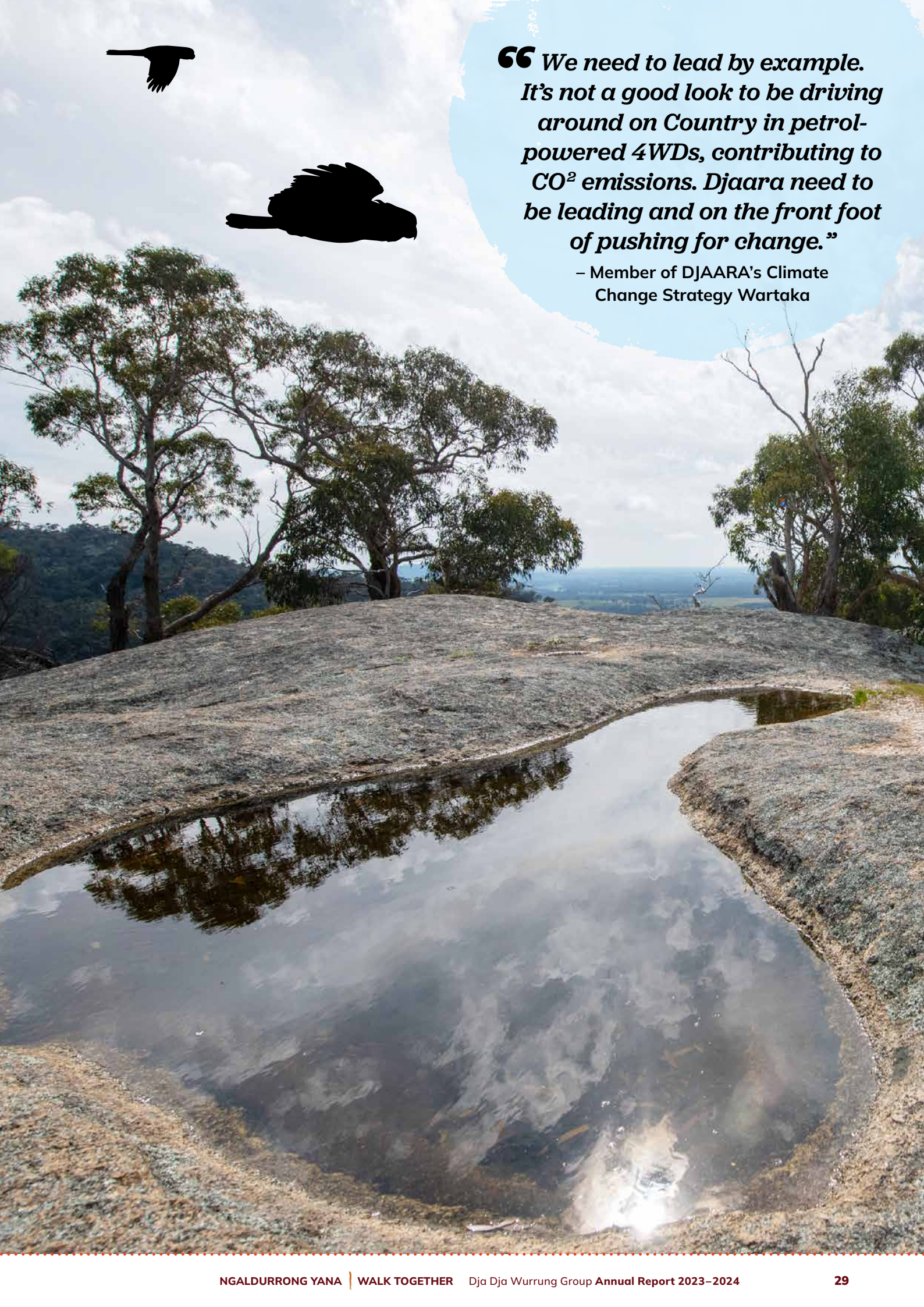
The team fosters authentic partnerships and meaningful engagement between DJAARA and various levels of government (and its agencies), spanning all aspects of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan. We collaborate closely with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Parks Victoria, other state government bodies, local government authorities, stakeholders, and community members, to ensure a lasting and impactful legacy for future Djaara.

The Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan 2014–2034 is a visionary 20-year plan that guides the work of the Dja Dja Wurrung Group. Implementing the plan is central to the team's mission. This extends to developing and implementing strategies which expand on the nine Dhelkunya Dja goals. These strategies include:

- Galk-galk Dhelkunya (Forest Gardening) Strategy 2022–2034
- Turning 'wrong way' climate, 'right way' Climate Change Strategy 2023–2034
- Nyauwi Mutjeka (Renewable Energy) Strategy 2022



Our upside-down Country is healthy again



“We need to lead by example. It’s not a good look to be driving around on Country in petrol-powered 4WDs, contributing to CO² emissions. Djaara need to be leading and on the front foot of pushing for change.”

– Member of DJAARA’s Climate Change Strategy Wartaka

Through these comprehensive strategies, the Dhelkunya Dja Policy team is not only working towards protecting and healing Country, but also pioneering pathways for a sustainable future to benefit all who live on Djandak.

Review of Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan

As the 20-year Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan reached its 10-year, halfway mark, the team focused on leading a thorough review of the plan, which will guide our work for the next decade.

The team is encouraging DJAARA Members and staff to reflect on a decade of accomplishments and contribute to shaping the document's future iterations. The team is dedicated to honouring heritage, celebrating milestones, and shaping a resilient future.

Nyauwi Mutjeka Electric Vehicle Transition project

In July 2023, DJAARA secured funding for the Nyauwi Mutjeka Electric Vehicle (EV) Transition project through the State Government's First Peoples Adoption of Renewable Energy grant program. As part of DJAARA's Renewable Energy Strategy, Nyauwi Mutjeka ('To Keep the Sun'), the project aims to promote a clean energy future by purchasing an EV, marking the first step in transitioning DJAARA's fleet to EVs. This initiative aligns with DJAARA's Climate Change Strategy 2023-2034.

DJAARA is purchasing our first electric vehicle, with delivery expected by August 2024. The EV, which will be branded with a design by Djaara artist Daikota Nelson, will symbolise DJAARA's leadership in renewable energy and spark conversations about the Strategy's broader goals.

The EV will play a role in delivering initiatives in the Strategy including building climate and energy literacy, hosting events on Djaara-led climate solutions, and developing educational resources.

Electrifying the new Corporate and Community Centre

DJAARA previously secured grants to install a large (135kW) solar system on the new Corporate and Community Centre, and for two electric vehicle chargers on site. As of June 2024, solar panels have been installed at the Centre and all electrical conduits for the EV chargers have been completed with final connections to follow soon.

Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration: Roadmap, Strategic Partnership and funding agreement

Through the Greater Bendigo Climate Collaboration, DJAARA played a key role in developing a Net Zero Roadmap for Greater Bendigo and the Loddon Mallee Region. In September 2023, DJAARA became a signatory to the Roadmap, which prioritises actions supporting Djaara self-determination and the implementation of DJAARA's Climate Change and Nyauwi Mutjeka Strategies.

DJAARA became a strategic partner in the Collaboration and, in June 2024, signed an agreement with the City of Greater Bendigo, which provides funding for DJAARA to advance its climate change, renewable energy, and healing Country strategies, and to collaborate on climate resilience initiatives.

First Nations Clean Energy Strategy submission

The team participated in a roundtable and provided a submission to the Commonwealth Government's First Nations Clean Energy Strategy consultation process. The Strategy will give First Nations people a say in renewable energy policies and programs.

Our submission set out DJAARA's strategic directions, aspirations and principles, and good practice from other jurisdictions to be considered in the development of the federal strategy. The submission draws on DJAARA's extensive recent experience engaging with governments, transmission infrastructure planners and renewable energy project proponents. It highlights Djaara aspiration to lead in the renewable energy transition, building on the capability of DJAARA and the Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises.

Yoorrook Economic Prosperity submission

The team coordinated a DJAARA submission to the Yoorrook Justice Commission with input from the Economic Development Strategy Wartaka and other teams. The submission highlighted the importance of economic equity for self-determination and to realise the vision and goals of Dhelkunya Dja.

It also highlighted the capability and successes of the Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises, as well as opportunities for governments to more effectively support the Traditional Owner Economy and honour their obligations under the Recognition and Settlement Agreement.

Success in Dhelkunya Dja Policy

The team supported the Dhelkunya Dja Trainee to complete a Certificate III in Business Administration, which paved the way to secure substantive employment at DJAARA.

The team also played a pivotal role in organising the Yapenya Celebrations, commemorating 10 years of DJAARA's Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) in November 2023. Additionally, the team coordinated insightful articles for the Nyaka Dja (To See Country) report, fostering deeper community understanding and connection to the land.

Galka STEAM Camp – DJAARA & La Trobe University Camp

In June 2024, the Dhelkunya Dja Policy team partnered with La Trobe University to deliver the Galka STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, Maths) camp. Galka (which means to create and build) was for First Nations high-school students living on Djandak who have shown interest in STEAM career options.

Program Manager Dhelkunya Dja Policy Lewis Brown was enthusiastic about the Galka STEAM Camp's outstanding success.

"The power of partnership between DJAARA and La Trobe University was evident, watching the students engaged in activities driven by Dja Dja Wurrung Culture," Lewis said.

"Students were immersed in a range of enriching activities that highlighted DJAARA's dedication to Caring for Country. They gained hands-on experience in monitoring trees through Galk-galk Dhelkunya (Forest Gardening) initiatives, conducted comprehensive Aboriginal Waterway Assessments, and learned invaluable lessons about Cultural Heritage from Uncle Jason Kerr. Additionally, they explored innovative methods for measuring the health of Country with the Environment Protection Authority (EPA)."

Nation Building and Agreement Making

Nation building – or re-building – evolved out of North America, associated with the re-building of First Nations communities in the territories now known as the United States and Canada. Nation re-building requires a fundamental power shift away from the State to Traditional Owners.

The Victorian Government is preparing to negotiate Nation-level treaties with Traditional Owner groups alongside the state-wide treaty to be negotiated with First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. DJAARA is also working with government agencies who share responsibility for caring for and healing Djandak. DJAARA's Nation Building focus is detailed below.

Treaty and Traditional Owner Engagement

This year DJAARA continued to engage with our community on Treaty.

Truth-telling: DJAARA Members and staff gave evidence to the Yoorrook Justice Commission's Land Injustice inquiry into systemic injustices of lands, skies, waters and natural resources. Commissioner Travis Lovett and Commissioner Anthony North came to Djandak and experienced Djaara-fied sites, and we shared about the benefit which we provide to the broader community when we are truly empowered to be on Country.

Sharing our voice: DJAARA Members came together in June to workshop the path towards Treaty for Djaara. Djaran Murray-Jackson, Dja Dja Wurrung Representative on the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, led the Dja Dja Wurrung Group Meeting. Members learned about the mechanisms that enable Treaty-making, and shared our aspirations for the future generations of Djaara and for Djandak.

We are actively laying the groundwork to ensure meaningful outcomes for Djaara which honour and strengthen our achievements to date.

Local Government Agreement Making

Local government agreement making provides opportunities to increase self-determined outcomes for Djaara. Local government is well placed to provide practical opportunities through:

- recognising Djaara as Traditional Owners
- education and relationship building
- engaging with DJAARA in strategic planning



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

- procurement and business support
- employment
- land management
- planning scheme processes.

We reviewed DJAARA's engagement with the 10 shires and regional cities across Djandak. This has identified strengths and weaknesses in our existing relationships and opened the door to conversations. It's built our awareness of opportunities for meaningful partnerships that will lay the groundwork for future formalised agreement making.

Improved partnerships with local government will continue to generate positive outcomes for Djaara and the broader community.



Local Government representatives, DJAARA staff and the Deputy Secretary First Peoples State Relations, Terry Garwood.



Yarn on Country Day, City of Ballarat Staff and Mayor, DJAARA and Wadawurrung.



DJAARA Nation Building Officer and Cr Henderson (Hepburn Shire Council) Sustainability Hepburn Day.

Statewide Representation and Leadership

The Victorian government policy and regulatory environment continues to prevent Aboriginal People from managing their lives and their lands on their terms. Although significant progress has been made over the past decade, there is much more to be done to realise self-determination.

DJAARA works collectively with other Traditional Owner Corporations (TOCs) to progress Traditional Owner self-determination in Victoria. Collectively, we negotiate with government departments and agencies like the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) and Parks Victoria. This includes negotiating on matters to:

- enable Traditional Owner self-determination
- further Traditional Owner leadership in specific program areas including cultural fire, water, energy, climate change and biodiversity.

DJAARA actively contributes to:

- Traditional Owner Corporation Caucus (TOCC), the collective organisation of Traditional Owners in Victoria. TOCC meets quarterly and is represented by DJAARA through the CEO or their delegate.
 - TOCC enables Traditional Owner Corporations to have collective access to Ministers, rather than have another party represent Traditional Owner views and priorities
 - TOCC's strategic plan represents the agreed priorities of Traditional Owner Corporations in Victoria, and is used for advocacy.
- Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations (FVTOC) CEOs Forum. The Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO (or their delegate) represents DJAARA at this quarterly forum, which discusses matters relating to Traditional Owner Corporations.
- Statewide Caring for Country Partnership Forum (SCfCPF) – twice a year.
 - The SCfCPF is a partnership between TOCs and DEECA.
 - SCfCPF enables representatives from the 11 'formally recognised' TOCs to engage with senior executives from DEECA and Parks Victoria, to set and progress matters of high priority to them. The intention is to transfer relevant decision-making powers and resources to Traditional Owners.
 - Key presentations and matters for discussion were:
 - o cultural fire, and cultural fire leadership
 - o cultural water, and Water is Life (DEECA)
 - o self-determination
 - o Victoria's climate action legislation
 - o Victoria's energy future
 - o Yoorrook Justice Commission – Land Injustice Inquiry.

Exchange of gifts from Gunaikurnai Land and Water Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) to Dja Dja Wurrung Group delegates at the Statewide Caring for Country Partnership Forum held on Gunaikurnai Country at Lakes Entrance. From left to right: Mark Costello, Katherine Mullet (GLaWAC), Uncle Tommy Baksh, Jessica Donaczy, Nicky McNamara, Daniel Miller (GLaWAC).



Victorian First Nations leaders delegation to Parliament House, Canberra

In June, DJAARA representatives joined with Victorian First Nations leaders as part of a delegation to Parliament House, Canberra, to advance the work of First Nations communities in Victoria.

Delegates met collectively with more than 10 Federal Ministers and Advisers on matters including regional development, health, education, employment, skills and training, housing, water, environment, foreign affairs and First Nations rights and recognition.

The delegation resulted in stronger networks and follow-up DJAARA-specific conversations with Australian government representatives.



Victorian First Nations Leaders delegation to Parliament House, Canberra. Delegates represented Traditional Owner Corporations, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service and First Nations Peak bodies.

Dja Dja Corporation says 'dja' to Voice

In the lead up to the Voice referendum, the Corporation advocated for a 'yes' vote. We advocated to say yes to Djaara having a say in issues that affect us and to bring attention to matters that are important to Djaara – and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People – at a Federal level.

At every opportunity, the Corporation will fight for the rights of Djaara.

Galk-galk Dhelkunya

Forest Gardening

The Galk-galk Dhelkunya team is responsible for implementing DJAARA's Galk-galk Dhelkunya Strategy 2022–2034 which is the key strategy under the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan 2014–2034 for healing Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Galk-galk Dhelkunya means 'to care for/to heal, many trees' in Dja Dja Wurrung language.

The focus of our program is to establish a range of demonstration sites and projects to:

- showcase Galk-galk Dhelkunya tools and practices
- get Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) out on Country
- build partnerships to support further application of forest gardening activities.

We work closely with other teams, including Djandak Wi (Country fire), Gatjin (water), Galkangu (Joint Management), Malamiya (Cultural Heritage) and DUMAWUL (cultural tourism/education), to co-deliver projects and activities. We also work with a range of external partners that support these projects and Djaara aspirations.

Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) is sick. Along with the massive damage from mining, logging and unsustainable development, Djaara were prevented from practising Culture for many decades. This has led to changed fire regimes and changed forest structures.

Galk-galk Dhelkunya provides a philosophy and the tools for Djaara to start leading efforts to more holistically care for, heal and manage landscapes across Central Victoria. Our team is focused on enabling more Djaara to be out on Country more of the time so together we can achieve the long-term goal of returning Country back to health.



Our upside-down Country is healthy again

DJAARA Timbers

This year under Galk-galk Dhelkunya we set up DJAARA Timbers – a Dja Dja Wurrung specialty and cultural timbers project. It aims to produce high-value timber products for cultural use, furniture, park signage, shelters, artistic installations and musical instruments. DJAARA Timbers is the first timber enterprise established by a Victorian Traditional Owner Corporation and has been made possible through Commonwealth grant funding.

A highlight of the project has been co-producing Galk-galk (Djaara Guitar) with instrument manufacturer Cole Clark – a high-value acoustic guitar made from native species sourced from and processed on Djandak by DJAARA. We are currently working with Djaara artist Daikota Nelson to develop Djaara designs to be applied to the instrument. The DJAARA Timbers project is important to Djaara because it provides space, resources and tools to practice Culture through crafting of artefacts, weapons and tools that tell Djaara stories about Djandak, which is a key aspiration outlined within the Country Plan.

Forest Gardening demonstration sites

We have established three forest gardening demonstration sites: Tobin Track and Babbington Hill in the Wombat State Forest, and a site in Paddys Ranges State Park, one of the six Aboriginal Title parks on Djandak. These are the first sites where contemporary forest gardening activities are being practiced in a modern context.

We have worked closely with forest scientists to conduct ecological monitoring across the sites. Key highlights have included:

- two-way knowledge sharing between DJAARA Members and academic scientists in delivering biocultural monitoring of the sites.
- delivery of the first Djandak Wi burn in the Grampians Region since colonisation. This was carried out at Babbington Hill in partnership with the Djandak Wi team and Forest Fire Management Victoria.

These sites are important places for Djaara to get back on Country and listen to its needs and then apply cultural land management tools (such as cultural fire), which return spirit to Country.



DJAARA is trialing a partnership with Cole Clark Guitars, a Melbourne-based manufacturer that produces high-quality guitars. The intention is to produce a range of Traditional Owner Guitars. The Galk-galk Dhelkunya (Forest Gardening) team at DJAARA has commissioned a Djaara artist to create designs for the guitar prototype.

The guitar is made with timbers entirely from Djandak. The timber was sourced from the Wombat State Forest (in southern Djaara Country, between Daylesford and Trentham) following previous storm events. The wood used in the prototype guitar includes Messmate stringybark, Blackwood and an exotic Monterey Cypress – which all grew on Djandak.

The aim of the project is for Dja Dja Wurrung People to have input into the story behind the guitar and the design on it. Each guitar will have a story tied to the wood. An information card will be attached to the guitar telling the story of the storm, where the timber is from and the story behind the design. Inspiration for the story and design is from the area, or a representation of Country where the trees grew, and the surrounding forest.

Djandak Wi

Country Fire



DJAARA's Djandak Wi (Country fire) team has worked closely with DJANDAK's Forestry and Fire team (see page 58) to deliver a very successful season of slow, cool burns across Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country).

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

Djandak Wi strategy development and launch

The team launched DJAARA's Djandak Wi (Country Fire) Strategy, Dhelkunya Wi (healing fire) 2024–2034, in a celebratory launch and burn at Gutjun Bulok (Tang Tang Swamp) near Dingee in May, 2024.

The strategy was developed in consultation with Djaara who generously contributed their biocultural knowledge and guidance. The strategy reflects their expertise, passion and commitment to the continuing practice of Djandak Wi.

Djandak Wi program

The team has maintained the breadth and scale of the Djandak Wi program, burning 14 places on Dja Dja Wurrung Country over 22 ignition days. Djandak Wi was applied in a range of ecosystems, including Box Ironbark, plains grassland (listed as threatened in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act), herb-rich foothill forest, grassy woodland, and heathy dry forest.



*Our upside-
down Country
is healthy
again*

Burns included:

- First Djandak Wi burns implemented in partnership with DEECA Midlands district at Lyonville Babbingtons Hill, Wombat State Forest (2 ignition days), and Clunes Lothair Reserve (1 ignition day).
- First Djandak Wi implemented in partnership with Macedon Ranges Shire Council.
- Introduced Djandak Wi to a new type of forest and a storm-damaged environment.

The team has developed and successfully implemented DJAARA's Djandak Wi Standard Operating Procedure. We are actively developing policy, planning and risk-management processes.

Together with the University of Melbourne, the Djandak Wi team is co-designing a Djaara-led biocultural monitoring and evaluation program. Funding is being sought for next steps.



Djandak Wi
Strategy launch
at Gutjun Bulok
(Tang Tang Swamp)



Members of the Djandak Wi
team, DJANDAK fire crew,
together with DEECA
(FFMVic) staff members
at the Djandak Wi
Strategy launch.



Joint Management



DJAARA's Joint Management Team at DJAARA is responsible for the oversight and implementation of the Joint Management Plan for Dja Dja Wurrung parks, released in 2018.

The Joint Management Plan sets out the management direction, which was developed in collaboration with Djaara, the Victorian government, and community stakeholders. The Joint Management team delivers the actions and initiatives through strategic projects.

Joint Management is an important opportunity for DJAARA to be actively involved in decisions for our Aboriginal-title parks. It also provides employment opportunities for Dja Dja Wurrung People who work with us in shaping the future of our parks.

Members are actively involved through our Djuwima Djandaki (Joint Management) Wartaka. Djuwima Djandaki means 'to show and to share our Country'. Members contribute cultural values, vision, and guidance to projects being delivered in our parks.

The Joint Management team delivers important projects in collaboration with DJANDAK, such as Recreation, Cultural Practice and Customs (RCPC) Area improvements, Galk-galk Dhelkunya (forest gardening) works, weed and pest management, and other Natural Resource Management works as specified in the Joint Management Plan.

Joint Management is Goal 9 in our Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan and, through delivering the Joint Management Plan, we are contributing to delivering the holistic vision of our Country Plan.

Throughout the 2023-24 financial year, the team continued to ramp up delivery of the Joint Management Plan. The Djuwima Djandaki Wartaka met several times over the year, working on projects as described below.

Entrance signs are steadily being delivered across our Joint Managed Parks, bringing DJAARA branding and a cultural identity into the parks. Road signage is also being delivered. All of Paddys Ranges State Park is now signed, with entrance and road signage providing a fresh look.

The Joint Management team, together with the Djandak Wi and Galk-galk Dhelkunya teams, carried out a Djandak Wi (Country fire) in Greater Bendigo National Park. It was the first Djandak Wi in a Joint Managed Park since the parks were designated Aboriginal title.

Larni Yirrip

The Larni Yirrip Project is a culturally designed campground just outside of urban Bendigo, created through engagement with Members and other stakeholders. Larni Yirrip (which means 'Home or place of ironbark tree') is part of the Victorian government's Victoria's Great Outdoors (VGO) initiative, which aims to enhance outdoor recreational opportunities across the state.

The project moved from the planning phase into the delivery stage and is currently being constructed by DJANDAK, with completion expected by March 2025.

Lalgambuk (Mount Franklin)

DJAARA officially opened the upgraded visitor site at Lalgambuk in a joint celebration with Parks Victoria.

The site features Dja Dja Wurrung-designed facilities, including a shelter, furniture and signage, installed by DJANDAK. The upgraded site is a great outcome that will also benefit the wider community.



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



Kooyoora State Park

The Kooyoora RCPC Area Project aims to enhance Kooyoora State Park by improving visitor facilities and preserving the park's natural and cultural significance. There are three main visitor hubs at Kooyoora State Park: a picnic area, campground, and lookout; all of which are being improved through the project.

Kara Kara National Park

The Kara Kara RCPC Area Project is another visitor-site project seeking to improve existing facilities, construct new Djaara-designed facilities, and provide opportunities for better park-user experience. Detailed designs for the project are nearing completion. Community input plays a crucial role in guiding the design process and shaping future development stages. Designs have been significantly shaped by engagement with Members through our Djuwima Djandaki Wartaka, as well as other park users, ensuring that the designs reflect cultural considerations and practical insights.

Hepburn Regional Park

The Hepburn Healthy Trails Project is part of the Victoria's Great Outdoors initiative being delivered in the Hepburn Regional Park. The project is currently in design phase. Following extensive engagement with Members, the designs are being refined to ensure they align with cultural values and community expectations. This collaborative approach has been instrumental in shaping the project, ensuring that it reflects both environmental considerations and the Cultural Heritage of the area. The project not only enhances trail accessibility and promotes healthy outdoor activities but also respects and incorporates the cultural significance of the landscape.

Paddys Ranges State Park

The Paddys Ranges RCPC Area Project, currently in design phase, will redevelop the picnic area and campground in Paddys Ranges State Park, providing cultural integration into our Parks. The design process, spearheaded by DJANDAK's Design Team, aims to enhance the functionality and aesthetic appeal of these areas, ensuring they meet the needs of park visitors while respecting the natural and cultural values of the site.

Nyerna Djayi Wurreka

Nyerna Djayi Wurreka, our resource guide for Members is a comprehensive tool designed to support Members using traditional plants within Joint Managed Parks. This guide showcases a range of plants that can be utilised as resources, highlighting their traditional uses and preparation methods. The guide can be used to visually identify plants. It also provides the location of plants in our Joint Managed Parks, and shares preparation methods for utilising the resources.

Balak Kalik Manya Project – Phase 1

With renewed support from the Joint Management Team, the Balak Kalik Manya (Walking Together) Project - Phase 1 is currently being delivered by DJANDAK at Wildflower Drive in the Greater Bendigo National Park. This project will deliver a new shelter, toilets, signage, and walking tracks around the visitor hub.

Bakaru Wayaparrangu

In May, DJAARA signed a historic benefit-sharing agreement with Canadian miner Agnico Eagle, operator of the Fosterville Gold Mine.

The agreement, Bakaru Wayaparrangu (in the middle, we all meet), is a significant step towards Dja Dja Wurrung self-determination.

It gives DJAARA some influence on the mine's environmental impact and remediation works after it closes. New jobs will be created to implement the agreement, and financial contributions made annually to DJAARA.

"For the first time, DJAARA has an income stream where our Board – not an external entity – can determine how that money can be used towards the goals of our Country Plan, and the needs of our People." – **Rodney Carter**

The agreement followed seven years of negotiations within a legislative system that favours developers.

"We negotiated this agreement with our hands tied behind our backs. We forged a path – finding our way through the colonial structures and laws that deliberately misrepresented and excluded Traditional Owners. But we stayed the course. And we thank Agnico Eagle for staying with us." – **Cassandra Lewis**

"This is a leading agreement that we would hope other Traditional Owner groups across Victoria and our neighbours would take note of." – **Uncle Graham Atkinson**, DDWCAC mining subcommittee.



Yapenya Celebrations

DJAARA highlighted an extraordinary decade of progress towards self-determination in its week-long Yapenya, in November 2023. A jam-packed program of events, activities and gatherings reaffirmed our ongoing commitment to our People, Country and Community through our Recognition and Settlement Agreement. Events included our first gala dinner, the Gatjin Strategy launch, Welcome Baby to Country, an art exhibition, twilight market, camp out and kids disco.

“We look forward to celebrating another decade of progress in 2033.” – **Rodney Carter**



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 under legislation in 2014 through the Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA). Its role is to oversee and support Joint Management of the six Aboriginal-title parks, which were returned to Djaara in 2013 under the RSA for the purposes of Joint Management.

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.

The Land Management Board takes its name 'Dhelkunya Dja', meaning 'healing Country', from the Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan 2014.

While the Country Plan covers the entire RSA area, the Joint Management Plan (2018) covers the six Joint Managed Parks under DDLMB's legislated responsibilities.

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

The Board works closely with the Joint Management partners: DJAARA, DJANDAK, Parks Victoria, and DEECA to implement the Joint Management Plan.

The DDLMB convenes and resources the JMP Implementation Team (JMPIT), which is a collaborative group that sets strategic priorities for implementing projects across the six parks, and drives the implementation work forward.

10 years of the DDLMB

In 2024, we celebrate the tenth anniversary of the Dhelkunya Dja Land Management Board Chair Uncle Graham Atkinson presented 'The DDLMB's decade of leadership' at the 2024 AITSIS (Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies) Summit.

5-year review of Joint Management Plan implementation

The DDLMB undertook a 5-year review of the implementation of the 2018 Joint Management Plan, finding that significant progress has been made implementing the plan.

The Board continues to refine processes to support implementation and works hard to manage or resolve systemic issues that threaten timely implementation of the plan.

In line with Goal 9 of the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan (Joint Management), the DDLMB is advocating to increase the number of parks on Djandak that are under joint management. The Board has initiated discussions with its Joint Management partners about DJAARA's readiness to jointly manage additional parks with its partners.

Subsequently, DJAARA has included a new tranche of parks for negotiation in its continuing RSA negotiations with the State.

Corporate and Business Services

The Corporate and Business Services branch supports the Dja Dja Wurrung (DDW) Group to achieve their business goals by providing services that aim to prioritise people and relationships while responding to rapid growth, minimising business risks and achieving compliance.

From finance, human resources and occupational health and safety to information technology and management, and risk and compliance, we aim to meet the unique needs of the various businesses, branches and teams across the Group.

The team has achieved significant milestones during the 2023–2024 year, playing a pivotal role in supporting DJAARA's growth and stability.

Recruitment amid rapid expansion

Facing rapid growth, the HR team successfully delivered an ambitious recruitment drive, launched a new recruitment platform, and implemented recruitment guidelines.

In the last financial year, the Dja Dja Wurrung Group welcomed 63 new employees, each bringing unique skills and experience aimed at enhancing Member Engagement services, Culture and Country preservation, and strengthening corporate services functions. These positions reflect a commitment to supporting the Dja Dja Wurrung community's Cultural Heritage, improving education and stable employment outcomes, Caring for Country and driving economic development initiatives.

We are now in a better position to support our expanding businesses and meet increased demand with a robust, skilled workforce. This influx of talent lays the foundation for future growth and innovation within the organisation.

Total Staff		Casual	Part-time	Full-time	Total	Percentage
	Djaara	68	11	22	101	48.5
	Indigenous	4	2	13	19	9
	Non-Indigenous	8	18	62	88	42.5
	Total	80	31	97	208	100

New Employees		Total	Percentage
	Djaara	20	33.3
	Indigenous	5	8.3
	Non-Indigenous	35	58.3
	Total	60	99.9



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



New Code of Conduct and relaunch of Values and new Behaviours

The rollout of a new Code of Conduct and Values and Behaviours represents a major achievement in fostering a positive workplace culture. This means that all employees now have clear guidelines on professional behaviour. Consequently, we are now able to ensure a more respectful and constructive work environment, which is essential for employee satisfaction and retention.

Workplace Gender Equality Agency Reporting

Our commitment to gender equality was underscored through our first Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) report. This has laid the groundwork for transparent and accountable practices, highlighting our dedication to fostering an inclusive workplace. Our efforts in this area demonstrate our proactive stance on diversity and equality, contributing to our reputation as an employer of choice.

Quarterly Staff Survey

Our quarterly staff survey has been instrumental in gauging employee satisfaction and identifying areas for improvement. This means we can proactively address concerns, enhance engagement, and implement feedback-driven changes in a timely manner to create a better work environment.

Business Systems Improvement

A significant amount of time and resources were dedicated to updating and improving our finance system and our ability to support procurement, project and job costing and e-commerce. This investment means that the DDW Group is better positioned to increase the amount of funds received from own source revenue rather than grant funding, further contributing to self-determination goals.

Overall, these achievements have significantly strengthened our organisation, supporting our people, building our workforce, and positioning us well for the future.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Infrastructure and Support

Another key project this year has been improvement of our ICT infrastructure, including transition to a new service provider. As a result, we can be more confident in the security of our ICT environment and we are positioned for a future of high reliability of ICT.

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) 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 financial statements cover Dja Dja Wurrung Group as a consolidated entity consisting of Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (the 'parent entity' or 'corporation') and entities it controlled at the end of, or during, the year ended 30 June 2024. The corporation and its subsidiaries were incorporated and domiciled in Australia.

The surplus of the group for the year ended 30 June 2024 was \$37,532,156.

Review of operations

At 30 June 2024, the group recorded a strong financial position, with current assets exceeding current liabilities by \$44,312,405, 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 2024 of \$63,760,651, comprising reserves of \$41,866,149 and retained surpluses of \$21,894,502.

The audited financial statements submitted to ORIC will cover the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024. Based on the information provided in the reports the group is solvent as at 30 June 2024 and has sufficient resources to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

Dja Dja Wurrung Economic Development and Investment Funds

During the 2023-24 financial year the Dja Dja Wurrung Group were able to maintain existing investment funds without having the need to draw upon them. The gradual improvement in the economy during the year meant that investment returns were higher than prior years and gave the ability for additional funds to be invested as shown in the following table.

For the year ended 30 June 2024

Investments CURRENT	2023 \$	2024 \$	
Term deposit	534,530	559,642	Funds have been set aside in this term deposit to provide for future asset replenishment.
Indigenous Real Estate Development Funds	1,388,400	1,886,123	IBA I-REIT High growth, commercial real-estate as per Investment Strategy recommendation
Indigenous Prosperity Fund – Growth Fund	1,294,013	4,734,928	IBA - Indigenous Prosperity Fund - Growth High growth
Indigenous Prosperity Fund – Income Fund	1,384,830	2,657,705	IBA - Indigenous Prosperity Fund - Income Modest growth, less risk
Total Investments	4,601,773	9,838,398	

Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises



DJANDAK

DJAA WALATJALANG



DUMAWUL

DHELK WUKTJARRANG



DJAKITJ

DHELKUNYA BENG

A message from our General Manager Economic Development **Steve Jackson**



It has been a significant year developing the commercial assets in Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises (DDWE): DJANDAK, DUMAWUL and DJAKITJ, as well as the investment assets for Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DDWCAC).

While growth has become a constant in DDWE across the past decade, the significant achievements this year cannot be overstated. DUMAWUL achieved budget in the first year of trading, DJANDAK grew 25 per cent, while DJAKITJ commenced construction of the yabby farm and offers an exciting new chapter for DDWE.

A few key highlights include:

DJANDAK officially launched the Dhelkunyangu Gatjin Strategy (working together to heal water). Progressed implementation of critical DJAARA programs such as Joint Management Program and Djandak Wi.

DUMAWUL opened the DUMAWUL Cultural Tourism and Creative Arts Hub in Hargreaves Mall, Bendigo. Established a foundation of education, tourism and arts services.

DJAKITJ completed design and commenced construction of the \$3.5M yabby farm. Finalised a 5-year agricultural research project for Kangaroo grass.

It is important to recognise the contributions of the DDWE and DDWCAC Boards who provide sound direction and expert governance to increasingly complex operations. Through the diverse range of employment and engagement models now available, Djaara continue to make a difference working alongside other highly motivated staff and contracted professional service providers. This report is a testimony to the value of the Dja Dja Wurrung Group working together to put Dja Dja Wurrung back in the landscape.

With support of the Investment Advisory Committee (IAC), DDWCAC applied the recommendations of the 2022/23 Annual Investment Action Plan. This has seen the investment portfolio grow to around \$8.9M incorporating the first tranche of the economic development funds negotiated through the RSA (variation 4).

DDWCAC have – over the past 10 years – established a solid economic base comprising of these investment funds, assets (such as the farm at Lockington) and \$2M of plant and equipment. This is further supported by two additional tranches of RSA funds negotiated by DDWCAC and due in late 2024 and 2025.

In 2023/24, DDWCAC also commenced the development of their Economic Strategy. Informed by a Wartaka, this Strategy will allow DDWCAC to utilise its available assets (economic enterprises and investment funds) to further progress the Dhelkunya Dja Country Plan and the aspirations of Dja Dja Wurrung for economic independence, self-determination and prosperity.

Steve Jackson

General Manager Economic Development

Business Capability

Business Capability supports all the enterprises with business systems and support, including: financial, project management, safety and marketing.

The team delivered the Mukmilang project, which created a new online safety system – SiteDocs – and rolled it out to all staff across the Dja Dja Wurrung (DDW) Group. This is a major achievement and an important system to ensure that all our staff go home safe every night.

A 5-star model was implemented to improve project management. This model delivered standard templates, a project management handbook and improved roles and responsibilities. These tools support project managers to bring in projects on time, cost and quality.

New family brands have been established for each of the Dja Dja Wurrung businesses, DJANDAK, DUMAWUL and DJAKITJ. The team created new websites for each entity, social media, uniforms and vehicle wraps. These new brands link the whole of the DDW Group family together with a unified appearance.

DJANDAK Academy has supported more Dja Dja Wurrung People into trainee positions and training within the organisation:

- One Certificate III in Civil Construction completed
- One Certificate III in Ecology and Conservation Management completed
- One Certificate III in Business Administration completed
- Four trainee roles supported
- Staff also undertook advanced training in Project Management and Business Management.



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



At DJANDAK, meaning ‘Country’ in Dja Dja Wurrung language, we embody djaa walatjalang (Love of Country) in all we do. We are a Djaara-owned enterprise dedicated to restoring health to Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) for the benefit of all who share it. Rooted in our Cultural Heritage, we blend traditional ecological knowledge with modern practices to heal and protect our land.

DJANDAK specialises in:

Djaara Centred Design: Embedding Djaara values into the built environment so the whole community can connect with our Culture.

Gatjin (Water): Healing waterways, rivers, and wetlands to revitalise ecosystems and ensure sustainable water resources.

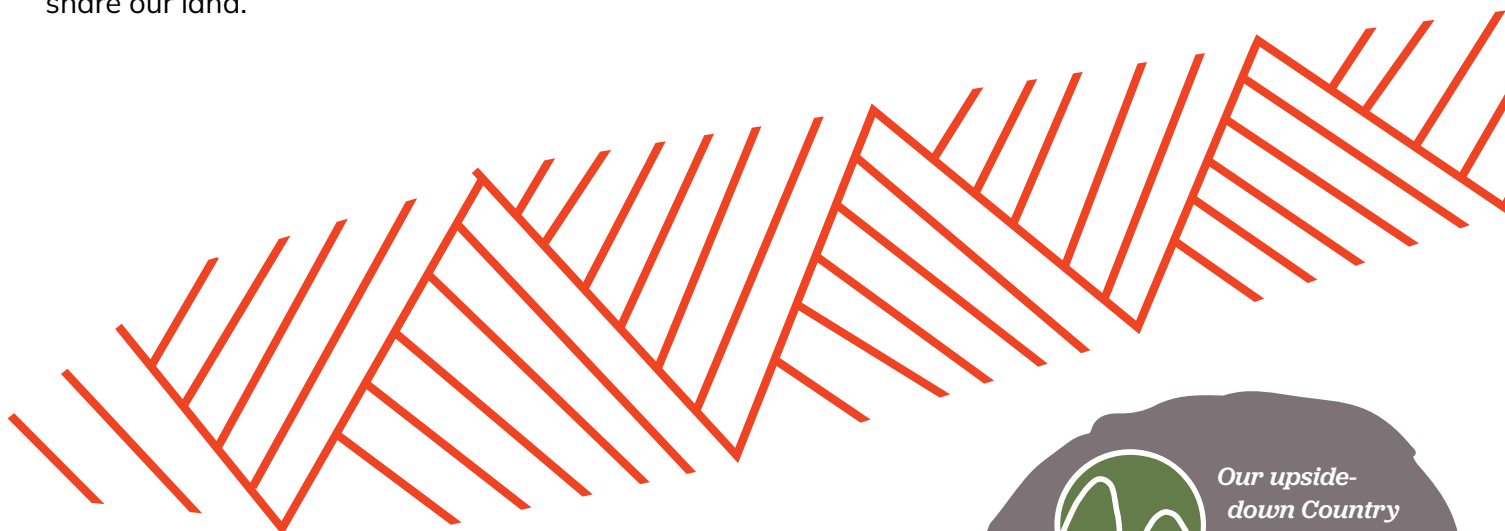
Natural Resource Management: Providing environmental services like revegetation, weed management, and pest control to promote biodiversity.

Forestry: Performing tree works to improve forest health, acting as the gardeners of Djandak.

Djandak Wi/Fire: Delivering the Joint Fuel Management Program – a state-wide program with Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) that manages fuel on public and private land – using cultural fire practices to heal the land and reconnect people with Country.

Land Management: Collaborating with Members and agencies to embed Djaara values into place-based projects, creating spaces that reflect our heritage.

Our work matters because it restores Djandak’s environmental health and empowers Djaara through economic development and cultural preservation. By putting djaa walatjalang at the heart of our operations, we contribute to our People’s self-determination and the wellbeing of all who share our land.



Our upside-down Country is healthy again

Djaara-centred design

Our team works in multiple ways across the enterprises to support Djaara members to influence public-works projects.

Djaara-centred Design

The design team helps to embed Djaara voices in designs. It is an important element to the ongoing connection to Culture and Country.

Our design work focusses on landscape and architectural projects, interpretive signage, and Djaara artwork in public spaces.

We work to reposition projects to embrace Djaara recommendations, artwork and creative expression of Culture. The team has developed a dynamic model that allows Djaara engagement to drive project outcomes. This model can be built on and developed for most design projects.

Project Outcomes and Highlights

Our team has had a successful year. It has grown to include more expertise and to enable us to develop more design work. Thanks to the DJAARA Members for their contributions. This work can only be achieved with Djaara input.

The team received the **2024 Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Victorian President's Award**. This award acknowledges the team's commitment to embedding Djaara's cultural connections and understanding of Djandak at the core of projects that benefit the whole community. This is the highest AILA award.

The **Lawcourts** and **Galkangu** projects are now complete. In June 2024 we held a Djaara Community Celebration with project partners. This sets a new standard for completing projects with traditional song and dance. The Lawcourts project also won multiple awards this year including: the Community Connection award 2024 Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Victorian award, the 2024 National Biophillic Design Awards in the category of Community and Urban Scale. It has also been nominated for a National AILA award.

Maryborough Art Gallery **garingilang gatjin wii** (garden of water and fire) was nearing completion at the end of this financial year. This project includes the work of several Djaara artists and the input of Djaara Elders. It was constructed by DJANDAK's construction crew. Ceremony has been embedded into this project with a ground-breaking ceremony and a Djaara women's planting day (with more to conclude this project). This project represents the first significant urban work by DJANDAK in Maryborough.

The **Hepburn Shire Town Structure Plans Cultural Values Assessment** project is complete. This work will lead the way with future local government projects of its kind. The team is in the process of developing more Biocultural Assessments and Healthy Country Monitoring projects across the Corporation and its enterprises.



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





'Yaram Yaram Mirndayi' (Chain of Ponds Serpent) by Aunty Marilyne Nicholls and Bec Phillips at the Bendigo Law Courts forecourt



Interpretive welcome signage at the Bendigo Airport



DJANDAK received the 2024 AILA (Victoria) President's Award

Artworks by Timani Nicholls-Moore at the redeveloped Central Springs Reserve in Daylesford



Interpretive signage at the Bendigo Airport helps visitors learn about Djaara and Djandak

Galkangu – Bendigo GovHub



Ngurare Beng Marna (Important, big meeting) by Rebecca Phillips. Installed at Galkangu.

Our **relationships and project portfolio** has significantly expanded both externally and internally (DJAARA / DUMAWUL / DJANDAK). Some great examples of this expansion are the following projects:

- Town Streetscape – Developing our first streetscape design for Inglewood, this project will celebrate the shared history of Inglewood and its connection to the Kooyoora region.
- Education Settings – Working with the Victorian School Building Authority and their consultants on many schools, kindergartens and early learning centres. This work is also resulting in more Djaara artist opportunities.
- Masterplans – Developing a masterplan for Long Swamp with the Gatjin team.
- Bring Djaara input to early phases of the design of significant projects – Providing a cultural design guide for the Centre for Cultural Collections at Flora Hill with input from DJAARA's Malamiya Team.

We are developing stronger relationships with local governments, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action, La Trobe University, Bendigo Heritage Attractions and Parks Victoria. We are excited about the new opportunities that this will bring.



Ecology, biodiversity and biocultural practices

Healthy Country means healthy People, and healthy Country needs healthy ecosystems.

At DJANDAK, biodiversity and biocultural project staff work to deliver on funding from the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action's Biodiversity 2037 plan – to stop the decline of our native plants and animals and improve our natural environment.

DEECA Biodiversity's grant opportunities allows us to undertake large-scale programs. We also work closely with other conservation-minded partners such as Bush Heritage Australia and the Wedderburn Conservation Management Network.

Our staff are mostly Aboriginal with some non-Aboriginal staff working together to deliver these projects. We are proud to deliver large-scale programs, in terms of funding and land area. We are also developing new work to diversify the Traditional Owner economy and help heal Country.

Wheel Cactus Control

Wheel cactus control at the Buckrabanyule Reserve continued for a third season. We delivered 228 hectares of Wheel cactus control, exceeding our target of 210 hectares. This achievement means we have now treated more than one third of this culturally significant site, with 335 hectares left to do. We will need to keep treating the Wheel cactus for about 10 years to remove it all and will need to secure more funding to keep this important work going.

Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy officer

A new officer role was created in September 2023 to work on the Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy. A Learn to Hunt program for Members and a pilot study are being implemented at Clunes Common. The Learn to Hunt program has received great interest, with about 30 registered. Through collaboration with our Joint Managed Parks team deer carcasses (from the Victorian Deer Control Program) are being used for food – not left and wasted.

Returning Spirit to Country

Two team members deliver the Returning Spirits program working on returning important plants and animals including dingo and yams to Country.

Healthy Country Planning

The team's Healthy Country Planning Manager has undertaken a number of projects, including finalising the Wurreka Galkangu Shared Strategic Landscape Plan 2024–2034. Wurreka Galkangu is a shared agreement between DJAARA and Bush Heritage Australia detailing how we will work together to heal Country. The process to develop the agreement started in 2020 so the completion (expected in October 2024) is the culmination of almost four years' work, including multiple on-Country meetings and workshops.



Our upside-down Country is healthy again

Gatjin (Water)

The Gatjin team at DJANDAK is the interface between water agencies and DJAARA Members, predominantly through Kapa Gatjin – DJAARA’s water knowledge group. The Gatjin team provides expertise and involvement in water strategy, planning and management for Djaara water on Djandak.

The Gatjin team is guided by DJAARA’s Gatjin strategy – Dhelkunyangu Gatjin (which means ‘Working together to heal water’ in Dja Dja Wurrung language). This strategy outlines Djaara ambitions and expectations around water, including:

- DJAARA’s involvement in how water is managed on Djandak
- greater ownership of water for DJAARA
- establishment of a DJAARA Gatjin Authority.

The Gatjin team coordinates Kapa Gatjin to complete Aboriginal Waterways Assessments (AWA). AWAs set the foundational values to guide the management of water on Country. In partnership with water agencies, the Gatjin team develops management plans for waterways and catchments that reflect DJAARA objectives and respect cultural practice. The Gatjin team works with water agencies to establish their work programs so that water management conducted by agencies can meet DJAARA expectations.

Djaara-led planning for the Avoca catchment

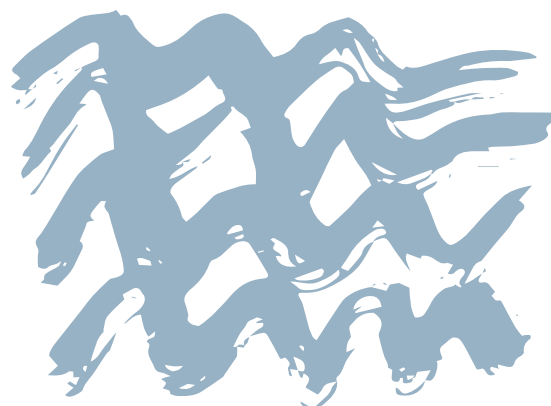
In partnership with the North Central Catchment Management Authority we have begun developing a plan for a healthy future for the Avoca River and surrounds. The foundation of this plan is the Djaara voice for Country. The aim is to enable water managers and community to see Country through the Djaara lens so we can all manage Country and gatjin together for a healthier future for all.

Bendigo Creek healing waterways action planning

Through the Yilingga Marna partnership agreement, DJAARA and the City of Greater Bendigo committed to fund restoration of Bendigo Creek. The Gatjin team commenced planning for restoration of the upper Bendigo Creek catchment. Through Kapa Gatjin (the Djaara water knowledge group), Djaara have conducted on-Country Aboriginal Waterways Assessments to identify values and objectives and set up the action planning for waterway improvements into the future.



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



Environmental water

Environmental water is delivered to many parts of Djandak. We are commencing waterway planning to articulate how Djaara expect environmental water to be used on Country to enable right water, right place, right time. We have been conducting on-Country assessments and conversations with Members at Thunder Swamp, a culturally significant component of the Myers Creek flood plain, and Kinyipanial Creek, a culturally important part of the Loddon River system. This planning will allow Djaara to influence environmental watering into the future and restore our authority.

Gatjin Strategy implementation

The Gatjin team established a group of industry partners to implement the Djaara Gatjin Strategy. The group is called Wanggal, which means 'a cluster of cumbungi working together to stabilise the bank of a river' in Dja Dja Wurrung language. Wanggal is made up of eight water agencies that operate on Djandak, plus DJAARA. Wanggal develops the joint objectives and actions that will be delivered by all agencies, and sets the platform for all agencies to work towards Djaara's vision for Gatjin.

Forestry and Fire

DJANDAK's Forestry and Fire team works closely with DJAARA's Djandak Wi team to support the goal of returning fire to Country and delivers contract forestry works on public and private land. The team provides employment pathways for Dja Dja Wurrung People, supporting Djaara self-determination.

Between leading our own burns and assisting the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) with fuel reduction, the Forestry and Fire crew has developed a reputation for its expertise and work ethic, which has spread across the state. Requests for the team's skills have increased dramatically on private and public land.

Our priority has been delivering projects that provide the most desirable outcomes for Djaara.

The team supported the scaling up of the Djandak Wi program (see page 38), which burnt 14 places on Dja Dja Wurrung Country. Notably, the amount of forest Country burnt was quadruple what has been burnt in recent years. Supporting Forest Gardening works in Paddys Ranges was a great opportunity to involve casual crew members and staff in healing Country.

The team worked with DJAARA's Djandak Wi team to implement the new Djandak Wi Standard Operating Procedure in February.

Collaboration with neighbouring groups has been a huge focus over the past year. We partnered with several different groups to complete burns and projects across the state.



We partnered with DEECA Midlands district for the first time, burning at Lyonville Babbingtons Hill and Clunes Lothair Reserve. We also implemented our first Djandak Wi in partnership with Macedon Ranges Shire Council.



Our upside-down Country is healthy again

Land Management

DJANDAK's construction and natural resource management crews work to heal Country and embed Djaara values in the landscape.

The construction team focuses on landscaping and building and installing infrastructure, delivering Djaara-designed projects across Country.

The Natural Resource Management (NRM) team's focus is on waterway management and repairing upside-down Country. The team has set high standards in healing Country through revegetation projects, site remediation works, infrastructure repairs and weed management.

Both teams work with partners and stakeholders such as local government, Parks Victoria, the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), Coliban Water, the North Central Catchment Management Authority (NCCMA) and private developers.

Highlights

Of the many projects the construction team delivered over the year, works on the Goldfields Track Experience stand out for re-embedding Dja Dja Wurrung Culture on Djandak.

- The Goldfields Track spans 210 kilometres, from Mount Buninyong in Wadawurrung Country to Bendigo on Djandak.
- The construction team delivered interpretive signage and visitor hubs to improve the visitor experience and encourage increased visitation.
- A new visitor node at Leanganook (Mt Alexander) includes a shelter, yarning circle, interpretive signage and a toilet. The node links into the nearby campground facilities.

Some examples of the NRM team's achievements to heal Country include:

- Major willow removal works along the Campaspe River and Campbells Creek to repair the waterways and help bring back the natural environment.
- Contract works on streamside slashing and weed control.
- A special feature of the expanded terminal building at Bendigo Airport is the landscaping works and interpretive signage prepared by DJANDAK. Djaara woman Timani Nicholls-Moore provided cultural and creative direction around the garden design and, together with Djaara man Andrew Saunders, provided cultural advice for the signage.



DUMA WUL is a DJAARA enterprise focusing on creative arts, cultural tourism and education. Established in 2022, DUMA WUL is proudly by DJAARA for Djaara, enabling self-determination and economic benefits through direct and indirect employment opportunities.

The DUMA WUL team identifies and supports Djaara enterprises offering development and mentoring services, and opportunities for self-employment.

DUMA WUL employs Djaara within its operations and is committed to engaging independent Djaara enterprises in the delivery of services and products to the market. This enables Djaara to choose work and employment that is meaningful to them and continue to support their families' wellbeing while growing and developing stronger Djaara businesses. This is raising wider recognition and respect for Dja Dja Wurrung People.

The corporate and government sectors, as well as the general public are taking part in DUMA WUL's:

- cultural consultancy and
- education and tourism products and services.

By promoting Dja Dja Wurrung Culture and its continued practice, participating businesses in Central Victoria are better equipped to implement culturally safe practices. Through Djaara-led tourism, the visitor economy is growing on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country).

In partnering, Djaara artists benefit by sharing Culture through the arts, and by selling their products to businesses and tourists that engage with DUMA WUL.

DUMA WUL is growing Djaara economic and cultural benefits

DUMA WUL delivered its Djaara Cultural Competency Program to over 800 participants this year. While this program continues to educate the public on Djaara values, it also means DUMA WUL has returned economic benefits to Djaara facilitators, independent artists and cultural consultants through direct and indirect employment opportunities. The combined value to Djaara has been over \$175,000.

In addition, DUMA WUL facilitated commissioned sales for Member artworks to the value of over \$60,000.



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

Yapenya

DUMAWUL hosted the Yapenya Art Exhibition during Yapenya, celebrating 10 years of DJAARA's Recognition and Settlement Agreement. (See page 43, for more on Yapenya.) Held at Dudley House within Bendigo's arts precinct, over 25 artists showed their works resulting in numerous sales.

Natural Resource Agreement filming

In 2022, DJAARA and the Victorian Government entered into a Natural Resource Agreement (NRA). Part of the Recognition and Settlement Agreement, the NRA articulates Djaara rights in relation to accessing and managing natural resources on Country.

DUMAWUL produced five short films, employing Djaara actors, to inform DJAARA Members of their rights on Djandak.

The films produced:

1. Use of fire
2. Water rights
3. Gathering plants
4. Hunting & natural resources
5. Camping rights

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



DUMAWUL Hub opening

The DUMAWUL Cultural Tourism and Creative Arts Hub opened in Bendigo's Hargreaves Mall in March, 2024. The Hub provides an exhibition space for Dja Dja Wurrung artists, a centre for DUMAWUL's cultural education programs and a base for cultural tourism.

The DUMAWUL team engaged with over 25 Djaara community members to install paintings, textiles, artefacts, jewellery and sculptures.

DUMAWUL hosted three separate events for the opening of the Cultural Hub: for Members, for DJAARA and enterprises staff and a grand opening with 60 influential people attending, including Government representatives. The Hub was funded through the Yuma Yirramboi (Invest in Tomorrow) Strategy.

Kangaroo Flat Primary School project

DUMAWUL is working with the City of Greater Bendigo on a project at Kangaroo Flat Primary School. The aim of the project is to share Dja Dja Wurrung cultural stories to promote self-determination and reconciliation.

The Indigenous children chose as their project to provide the school with another uniform option with an Aboriginal design.

DUMAWUL organised a full-day session, teaching culture and spending time on Country, followed by 10 workshop sessions to give the children the fundamental skills to design the artwork for the uniform. Once the uniform project is complete, DUMAWUL will organise a session for the Indigenous children to present to their peers.







DJAKITJ means 'dining room' in Dja Dja Wurrung language. We use traditional knowledge and contemporary agricultural techniques to plant, harvest and manage bush tucker in the landscape.

We want to showcase Djaara native ingredients that are grown on Djandak and that have been traditionally eaten by Djaara.

These foods are native to Central Victoria and can be combined with other Australian bush tucker and foods from around the world to create new recipes and taste experiences for everyone to enjoy.

It's been a big year for the Corporation's newest enterprise, making great progress on two major projects: the yabby farm at Lockington, and Kangaroo Grass trials.

Yabby farm project

The yabby farm project is well underway. With the design-and-development stage complete, construction of 45 ponds has begun.

This has included redevelopment of large areas of the farm, as well as a host of engineering and design work. The work undertaken this year will see DJAKITJ building towards a fully operating yabby farm within the next year.

Industry support has been key to the success of the project. We worked extensively with the Victorian Fisheries Authority, Fisheries Research and Development Corporation and the aquaculture industry along the way. This included visits by staff and crew to the Snobs Creek fish conservation hatchery, as well as being involved in training and development groups and workshops. We also acknowledge the Indigenous Land and Sea Corporation who are supporting Dja Dja Wurrung self-determination by providing funding for capital costs to establish the yabby farm.

This has meant staff have had the opportunity to witness the great work being done on re-populating native fish species across Country, but also learn and better understand the opportunities that exist within the aquaculture sector, both through DJAKITJ and further afield.

As a key outcome of this, DJAKITJ will continue to have the opportunity to run training, education and development programs internally, and with these key partners into the future.



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

A Bigger Vision

The DJAKITJ Enterprise is so much more than just the largest Indigenous-owned and run yabby venture in the Southern Hemisphere. It also represents an opportunity and investment in the aquaculture and agriculture industries in a manner that has never been done, breaking down barriers and creating a pathway for Traditional Owner Agriculture and Food and Fibre business to thrive. It will create training and education pathways and economic opportunities centred on cultural practice, land management and our Country Plan goals.

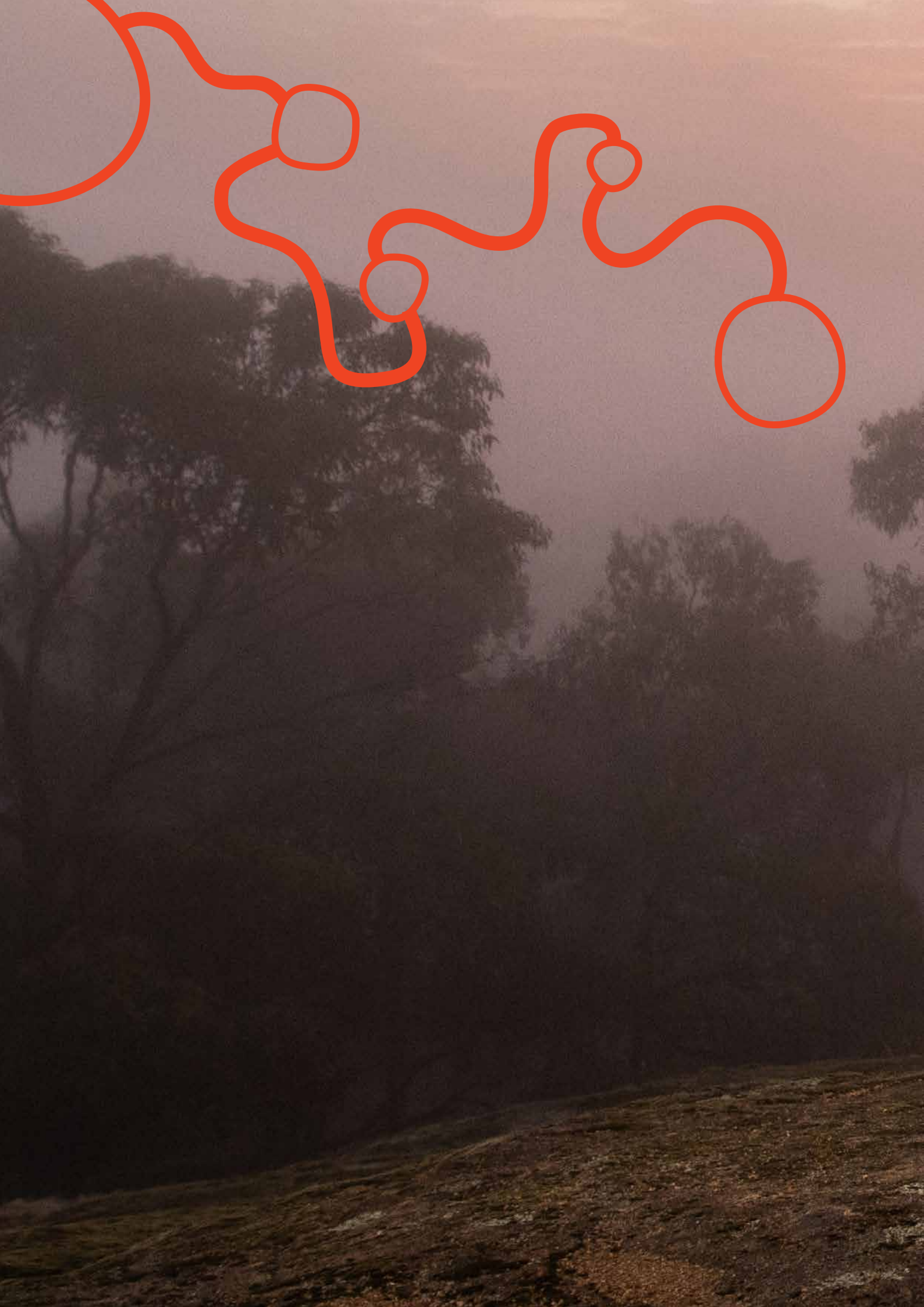


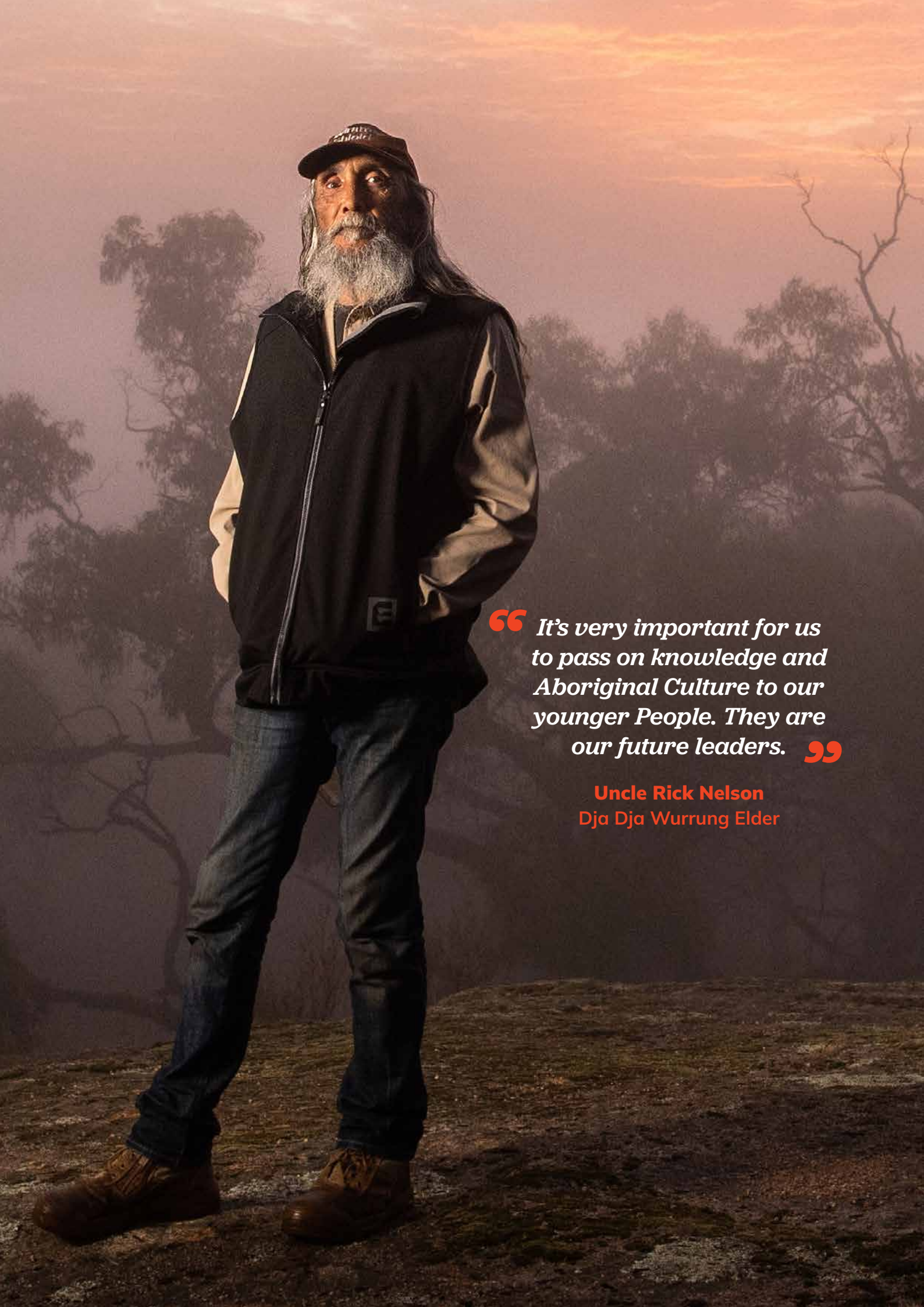
Kangaroo Grass project

This year saw over 30,000 Kangaroo Grass plants established on the Lockington farm, planted by our DJANDAK crew. This was the culmination of a multi-year project focusing on Kangaroo Grass as a key plant species and food product. This project has now laid the groundwork for future development of Kangaroo Grass as a harvestable crop, as well as a multitude of future opportunities within the food and fibre space.

“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





“ *It's very important for us to pass on knowledge and Aboriginal Culture to our younger People. They are our future leaders.* **”**

Uncle Rick Nelson
Dja Dja Wurrung Elder

balaki wuka | giving to community

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation trading as DJAARA
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