



Annual Report

2024-25

Honouring Ancestors

The Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation (the Corporation) pays deep and enduring respect to the Ancestors of the Wamba Wemba people. These Ancestors walked Country long before the disruptions of colonisation, carrying lore, story, language and ceremony across generations. They are the reason we continue to stand strong today. Our Ancestors ensured the survival of knowledge systems by passing on sacred responsibility through family, Country and kinship. They taught resilience not just through words, but through action, caring for water, reviving language in times of threat, holding ceremony and walking long distances to maintain connection and identity. Everything the Corporation does, from cultural heritage assessments to economic development, is shaped by their strength and legacy.

Our Apical Ancestors

George Allen • Jemima Burns • Koombra Alexander Campbell • William Day • Eliza Edwards • Henry Edwards • Edward Firebrace • Edward Joachim • Ernest McGee • John Moore • William Sampson • Mary/Margaret Ingram (nee Smith) • Kathleen/Kitty and Walin (Stewart) • Mary Tattambo • Robert Taylor • Richard and Sarah Wilson/Crow (Agnes Edwards) • David Taylor • Sarah Smith



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This report presents the activities, achievements and strategic growth of the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation during the 2024-2025 financial year. It reflects the voices of our Community, the authority of our Ancestors and the vision of a strong, self-determining future for all Wamba Wemba people.

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Council of Gnerrick Gnerrick

The Council of Gnerrick Gnerrick is the Corporation's cultural authority body. Made up of Wamba Wemba Gnerrick Gnerrick, the Council guides decision-making on matters of cultural lore and Community representation.

Gnerrick Gnerrick bring lived experience, cultural knowledge and leadership that continue to shape the direction and legitimacy of the Corporation. Many members of the Council have played key roles in the fight for recognition and rights over decades. Their efforts helped lay the foundations for the establishment of the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation and continue to guide its growth and operation today.

In 2024-2025, the Council of Gnerrick Gnerrick made a number of significant contributions to the Corporation's cultural governance. The Council provided guidance throughout the process of applying for Registered Aboriginal Party status, including reviewing materials, supporting internal governance and presenting cultural knowledge as part of the submission to the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council. The Council also played a central role in the design and cultural foundation of the Corporation's Fieldworker Program.



This included reviewing protocols, advising on cultural safety and mentoring staff and new recruits. During Cultural Heritage Management Planning assessments and field surveys, members of the Council offered oversight and support, ensuring cultural protocols were followed and respected.

In addition, the Council provided important advice in key meetings with government departments, local councils and developers. Their presence has brought cultural strength and credibility to the Corporation's external engagement. The continued use and endorsement of the name "Wamba Wemba" including how staff pronounce and present the spelling in official business is a direct result of the Council's leadership in setting cultural standards.

The Corporation acknowledges the critical role the Council plays in upholding Wamba Wemba cultural integrity. To support this, the Corporation has provided administrative coordination, travel assistance, accommodation, catering, venue hire and sitting fees. This financial and logistical support has helped ensure that Council meetings are accessible and properly resourced.



Council Members



**Aunty Wendy
Brabham**



Aunty Louise Moore



Uncle Daniel Kelly



Uncle Gary Murray



**Aunty Stephanie
Charles**



**Aunty Hazel
Atkinson**



Aunty Carolyn Briggs

Meeting dates and Attendance Records

The Corporation's Rule Book prescribes how a member can join the Council of Gnerick Gnerick of the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation.

Member	20/9/24	10/1/25	2/5/25	24/5/25
Aunty Carolyn Briggs		✓	✓	✓
Uncle Daniel Kelly	✓	✓	✓	✓
Uncle Gary Murray	✓	✓	✓	✓
Aunty Hazel Atkinson		✓	✓	✓
Aunty Louise Moore		✓	✓	✓
Aunty Stephanie Charles		✓	✓	✓
Aunty Wendy Brabham	✓	✓	✓	✓

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors provide leadership and governance oversight. Directors bring deep Community knowledge and governance experience. They are all proud Wamba Wemba people with a long history of Community connection and Community advocacy and together with the Council of Gnerrick Gnerrick the Corporation is truly a Wamba Wemba led Corporation.



Nakia Firebrace
Chairperson
(appointed 2024)

Nakia Firebrace is a proud Wamba Wemba and Yorta Yorta man and Chairperson of the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation. He is the Operations Manager at the Department of Justice and Community Safety (Victoria) and a named applicant in the Wamba Wemba Native Title Claim. Nakia has also contributed to the Yoorrook Justice Commission, supporting truth-telling and community engagement across Victoria.

As Chairperson, Nakia provides strategic leadership and oversight of the Corporation's governance, operations and stakeholder relations. He works extensively on Country in cultural heritage assessment. Nakia is deeply committed to caring for Country and building long-term economic prosperity, empowerment and self-determination for all Wamba Wemba people.



Jason Kelly
Deputy Chairperson
(appointed 2024)

Jason Kelly is a proud Wamba Wemba and Mutthi Mutthi man who serves as Deputy Chairperson of the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation. He is an inaugural Member of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and authored the resolution that led to the establishment of the Yoorrook Justice Commission. Jason has been integral to advancing the Treaty and shaping the Treaty Bill, while also contributing extensive experience in youth justice, cultural education and high-level negotiations focused on economic prosperity and self determination process for Wamba Wemba people.

As Deputy Chairperson, Jason supports the Chair and Board in governance decision-making, ensuring the Corporation's strategic direction aligns with community priorities. He also provides insight on cultural governance, youth engagement, negotiations and Treaty matters, ensuring Wamba Wemba voices are well represented in regional and statewide policy discussions.



Lisa Thorpe
Secretary
(appointed 2024)

Lisa Rose Thorpe is a proud Wamba Wemba woman raised on Boonwurrung Country with strong bloodlines to the Boonwurrung, Gunnai, Gunditjmara and Dja Dja Wurrung clans. She is the Secretary of the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation and the First Peoples' Partnerships Lead at Oxfam Australia. Lisa has extensive experience in community engagement and truth-telling through her work with the Yoorrook Justice Commission and the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

In her role as Secretary, Lisa provides strong governance oversight and ensures the integrity of the Corporation's records, meetings and compliance obligations. She often represents the Board at workshops and seminars that strengthen the Corporation's ability to meet its legislative and regulatory requirements while remaining grounded in the cultural world in which it operates. Her leadership reflects a deep commitment to human rights, self-determination and the advancement of Wamba Wemba voices and visibility.



Lowana Moore
Treasurer
(appointed 2023)

Lowana Moore is a proud Wamba Wemba woman, Treasurer and previous Chair of the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation. She holds a Reserved Seat in the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria representing the Wamba Wemba people. With more than two decades of experience in Aboriginal education, family and community services, Lowana is a recognised leader in linking education with Country and cultural knowledge to build pathways for future generations.

As Treasurer, Lowana provides oversight, advice and guidance on the Corporation's financial management, strategic planning and reporting responsibilities. She ensures that the Corporation's resources are managed responsibly and aligned with its objectives. She has deep roots within the community and is well respected for her tireless work advancing Wamba Wemba voices. Lowana also plays a key leadership role in Treaty discussions and economic development initiatives designed to empower Wamba Wemba people and protect their heritage.



**Uncle Robert (Bobby)
Nicholls**
Director
(appointed 2023)

Uncle Robert Nicholls is a proud Wamba Wemba, Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wotjobaluk and Barapa Barapa man and Director of the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation.

As the Council of Gnerrick Gnerrick Representative, Uncle Bobby acts as the primary liaison between the Council and the Board, ensuring consistent communication, cultural integrity and the respectful sharing of knowledge between both governance bodies. He provides trusted cultural advice to strengthen decision-making, governance and community engagement within the Corporation.



Meeting dates and Attendance Records

The Corporation's Rule Book prescribes how a member can join the Council of Gnerick Gnerick of the Wamba Wamba Aboriginal Corporation.

	Uncle Robert Nicholls	Jason Kelly	Lisa Thorpe	Lowana Moore	Nakia Firebrace	Jess McDonald	Jennifer Mason
28/08/2024	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
1/09/2024	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
17/09/2024			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
7/10/2024	✓	✓	✓		✓		
10/10/2024	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
20/11/2024			✓	✓	✓		
15/12/2024		✓	✓	✓	✓		
17/12/2024		✓	✓	✓	✓		
9/01/2025		✓	✓	✓	✓		
28/01/2025		✓	✓	✓			
4/02/2025		✓		✓	✓		
18/02/2025		✓	✓	✓			
25/02/2025		✓	✓	✓	✓		
4/03/2025		✓	✓	✓	✓		
11/03/2025			✓	✓	✓		
18/03/2025		✓	✓				
25/03/2025			✓				
1/05/2025		✓	✓	✓	✓		
24/05/2025	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
30/06/2025		✓	✓	✓	✓		

Chairperson's Foreword

This past 2024-25 year, our Community stood up and claimed our rightful place as a Registered Aboriginal Party. That is no small achievement, it is the result of generations of persistence, leadership and deep cultural obligation.

Becoming a Registered Aboriginal Party means we now carry formal responsibility for protecting our cultural heritage and representing our people across government, development and Community spaces. But even more than that, it affirms what our Ancestors and Elders always knew: that we have the authority to speak for Country, for culture and for our future.

In my time as Chairperson and in many conversations with Community, you keep telling us “culture keeps us strong. Country heals us. Good governance builds trust. Economic independence creates opportunity.” We cannot achieve one without the others. That vision, shaped by our members and our Gnerrick Gnerrick, has become the foundation for everything we are doing presently and everything we are planning for the future. Now we look ahead to shaping our Strategic Plan, which will ensure that every future decision continues to reflect the aspirations and authority of the Wamba Wemba people.

I want to acknowledge the strength and vision of those who came before; earlier Boards, Community members and Gnerrick Gnerrick who laid the groundwork over many years, often without funding to support their work. Many of those leaders are now sitting with us as the Council of Gnerrick Gnerrick and as respected Community members. It is with their cultural guidance that we move forward.



The achievements outlined in this report, our staffing, systems, fieldworker training, cultural assessments, Treaty engagement and governance reforms are the first steps of a much longer journey. Together we've done the hard work of establishing our foundation. Now we look ahead to shaping our future.

The fire lit by our Ancestors is still burning. It is our role to keep that flame alive. Wiran proud, Wiran strong.

Nakia Firebrace
Chairperson

Outgoing Chairperson's Foreword

Back in August 2024, I stepped down as Chairperson of the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation and I was proud to hand over the reins to our newly elected Director, Nakia Firebrace. I did so with full confidence in his leadership and vision.

Looking back, I feel incredibly proud and grateful for the time I spent in the role. It was a real honour to serve during such a pivotal time for our community even though we had very limited resources, we managed to achieve some huge milestones.

We found time wherever we could from late nights, weekends, lunch breaks, juggling emails, texts and online meetings, all to show that we were ready, inclusive and capable of leading the Corporation. And in the end, that hard work paid off. We proved ourselves and helped lay the groundwork for some truly historic wins.

But it wasn't just our efforts, our success was built on decades of determination and advocacy from our Gnerrick Gnerrick, whose strength and persistence made these achievements possible. I also want to acknowledge the support we received from Massar Briggs Law, which was instrumental in helping the Corporation navigate through some of the more complex challenges.

We were part of a much bigger story and I'm proud of the role we played in it!

The Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation was awarded a reserved seat on the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria following a unanimous vote on March 21, 2024.

This marked a historic moment, as it was the first time a Traditional Owner group without formal recognition under government legislation was granted guaranteed representation in the Assembly. I was honoured to be our first elected member.

Just a few months later, on 7 August 2024, we were officially awarded Registered Aboriginal Party status for part of our application area. This recognition marked a major milestone, making Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation the 12th RAP in Victoria, a powerful step forward in asserting our cultural authority and protecting our heritage.

These milestones didn't happen in isolation, they were made possible by the strength and commitment of those who came before us. I want to take a moment to honour our ancestors, our Gnerrick Gnerrick and all previous board members whose dedication and sacrifices laid the foundation for everything we've achieved so far.

Now is the time for all of us, young and old to stay engaged, stay informed and keep building. Whether it's through leadership, advocacy or simply showing up for our community, every contribution matters. Let's keep the momentum going and ensure the next chapter is even stronger than the last.

Lowana Moore

Proud Wamba Wemba Woman

Outgoing Chairperson, Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation

Reserved Seat Holder, First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria

CEO's Forward

When I accepted the role of CEO, it was with the understanding that the Board had engaged me to help establish something meaningful and enduring for Wamba Wemba people. I was excited by the opportunity to apply my skills to lay the foundations for a transparent, accountable and equitable Corporation for all Wamba Wemba members.

It has been a privilege to work alongside our dedicated staff and the Wamba Wemba Community during this critical foundation stage. Together, we have established robust governance frameworks that not only meet our obligations under the CATSI Act and the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act but also build trust with stakeholders and embed the cultural governance principles of Gnerick Gnerick. We have introduced essential systems covering finance, governance, WHS, membership, policy, strategy, cultural heritage protection and workforce development. These systems provide a strong and sustainable platform for the Corporation's future.

Beyond internal systems, we have listened to your aspirations through roadshows, consultations and Community activities. These conversations have shaped the first draft of our Strategic Plan (2026–2030), which sets a clear direction for the next five years.

We have secured agreements, contracts and partnerships with government, developers and sponsors that create a roadmap for growth and investment in programs that matter most to Wamba Wemba people; rangers, cultural heritage assessments, education initiatives, treaty engagement, language revitalisation, mapping of Country and exploring tourism opportunities.



We are also preparing for the significant responsibilities and opportunities that come with renewables and mining on Wamba Wemba Country, ensuring that Wamba Wemba rights are upheld and that benefits flow back to Community .

This year has been challenging but deeply rewarding. I am proud of what we have achieved together and excited about the next phase of the Corporation's journey. Thank you for your trust and support as we continue building a strong future for Wamba Wemba people.

Alister Stevic
Chief Executive Officer

Name and Logo

The Corporation proudly uses the name Wamba Wemba, combining the spelling of “Wamba Wamba” with a double A and “Wemba Wemba” with a double E.

Both forms appear across history and within families and this combined spelling honours the diversity of usage within our Community.

The choice of using ‘Wamba Wemba’ reflects the Corporations inclusivity and symbolises the many ways our people have spoken of their heritage. This approach was reaffirmed by the Council of Gnerrick Gnerrick at their meeting on 28 September 2025, recognising it as the most respectful and unifying path forward.



Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation

Our logo features two feathers from the Wiran, the red-tailed black cockatoo, our Wamba Wemba Nation's totem. Male Wirans have black feathers with striking red panels on their tails, while females display tails patterned with red, orange, yellow, or white stripes.

The Wiran symbolizes strength, resilience and continuity, reminding us of our deep connection to Country. These values inspired the design of the Wamba Wemba logo, ensuring it reflects everything that is important to our people.

The logo was created by Troi Ilsley, a talented young Wamba Wemba and Gunditjmara woman. Her work showcases the creativity and cultural connectedness of our youth.



Troi Ilsley

Our People

Our Country and History

The Wamba Wemba are the Traditional Owners of Country that stretches along the Murray, Edwards and Wakool Rivers in north-western Victoria and south-western New South Wales. Our people have lived, cared for and sustained this Country for countless generations.

From the 1840s onwards, waves of non-Indigenous settlement brought dramatic change. Intensive farming, water diversion and land clearing disrupted the landscape, caused widespread loss of sacred sites and displaced many families from their traditional homelands. Yet Wamba Wemba people endured. We adapted, remained on Country where possible and continued to protect the cultural values and knowledge passed down through our ancestors.

Today the resilience of our people is reflected in the formal recognition of our cultural authority. In March 2024 Wamba Wemba were allocated a reserved seat on the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, affirming our continuing voice in statewide representation. In August 2024 the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation was appointed as the Registered Aboriginal Party under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic) for part of our Victorian Country, acknowledging our responsibility to protect and manage our cultural heritage for future generations.



Our People Today

Wamba Wemba people remain a strong and proud Community with deep connections to the Murray-Mallee region and beyond. Many families continue to live in and around Swan Hill and Deniliquin, while others made their homes further afar. Across these locations approximately 350 members are connected through the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation.

As part of our ongoing work we aim to progressively capture and report data that reflects the full extent of Wamba Wemba Country, including communities across Victoria and New South Wales, to build a more complete picture of our people, our strengths and our needs.



Our Community Voice

Throughout 2025 the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation has undertaken a wide-reaching process of Community engagement to ensure that our direction continues to reflect the values, needs and priorities of our people. We sought out our Community's opinions through a combination of Road Shows, Elders' meetings, youth discussions, online engagement and extensive feedback from the Council of Gnerrick Gnerrick.

We sat with Community, we sat with Elders and we listened to our young people. We held Road Shows in Swan Hill, Deniliquin, Shepparton, Bendigo and Melbourne, providing open forums for discussion about Country, culture, language and wellbeing. Alongside these in-person gatherings we conducted online questionnaires and information sessions, enabling off-Country members and younger generations to participate and share their perspectives.

Engagement also included Community gatherings, BBQs and cultural activities that created informal spaces for members to share their views. The Council of Gnerrick Gnerrick played a vital role in this process, offering cultural guidance, governance insight and continuity of Community voice across each phase of consultation.

This engagement is not a one-off exercise. The Corporation continues to meet regularly with members, Elders and youth across all locations, maintaining dialogue and connection as we refine our strategies and programs. We also hold regular Community events that bring families together to share food, stories and updates about our projects and plans.





The insights gained through these conversations form the foundation for our decisions and the design of all future projects. Across all engagement activities a consistent message emerged: Wamba Wemba people want to reconnect with Country, heal Country and strengthen cultural knowledge for future generations. Participants spoke of the need for safe cultural spaces, healing places and opportunities for young people to learn on Country. They also emphasised the importance of unity, self-determination and stronger Wamba Wemba leadership in local and regional decision-making, creating leadership and positive pathways for the next generation.

Community members also raised aspirations for improved health and social services, housing for Elders, support for youth experiencing homelessness and local employment opportunities. Many voiced the need for WWAC to take an active role in advocating for Community control and cultural safety in all services delivered on Wamba Wemba Country.

These voices continue to guide our work. They remind us that our strength lies in listening, in remaining connected to our people and in ensuring that every step forward reflects the collective vision of the Wamba Wemba Community.



Looking Ahead

The story of the Wamba Wemba people is one of endurance, renewal and responsibility. We honour our ancestors by caring for Country, protecting heritage and investing in our young people.

Through the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation our community is reasserting cultural authority, building governance strength and forging a pathway of self-determined development.

As we look to the future our vision remains clear: To see Wamba Wemba people strong, proud and healthy, with culture at the heart of community life and prosperity shared across generations.

Cultural Protection & Revitalisation



Cultural protection is one of the most important responsibilities held by the Corporation. As the Registered Aboriginal Party for Wamba Wemba Country, our role is to speak for Country, uphold cultural lore and ensure that sites, stories and ancestral knowledge are protected and respected in all activities and developments that take place on Country.

This work includes assessing Cultural Heritage Management Plans, undertaking cultural heritage surveys, guiding developers and training our own people to take on this important work into the future. Cultural heritage is not just about compliance. It is about respect. It is about listening to Gnerrick Gnerrick, protecting the stories of our ancestors and ensuring that Country is cared for properly.

Uncle Dan Kelly has played an instrumental role in shaping this work. He has provided cultural guidance and training to the Corporation's staff and fieldworkers and continues to remind us of the cultural responsibility we carry in this space. His knowledge, experience and generosity have helped shape the design of our heritage processes and ensure they are grounded in proper cultural protocol.

Throughout 2024-2025, the Corporation built and delivered its Cultural Heritage Fieldworker Program. This included field training, workplace safety systems, cultural safety protocols and mentoring support. We are proud to have engaged Wamba Wemba community members directly in the delivery of heritage surveys and heritage fieldwork across Country.



In addition to our compliance and survey work, the Corporation has strengthened its cultural authority through ceremonial leadership. As a Registered Aboriginal Party, we have begun formally delivering Welcome to Country ceremonies for key partners and stakeholders operating on Wamba Wemba Country. Aunty Stephanie Charles and Aunty Hazel Atkinson have led much of this work, bringing warmth, dignity and cultural strength to each event.

These ceremonies are important not only for showing respect, but also for making sure Wamba Wemba voices are present when others are working or gathering on our Country.

CHMP Assessments Conducted During 2024-2025

CHMP Name	Summary
VNI West	Transmission line for renewable energy connecting Melbourne – Sydney
Normanville Energy Park	Proposed wind farm to connect to VNI west
Pental Island Bridge	Redevelopment of foot bridge at Pental Island
Cannie Wind Farm	Proposed wind farm to connect to VNI west
Meering West Wind Farm	Proposed wind farm to connect to VNI west
Swan Hill Bridge Replacement	Replacement of Swan Hill Bridge, from Victoria to NSW
Lyons Track	Upgrade and diversion of a track by Murray River
Murray River Adventure Trail	A proposed tourism trail along the Murray River
Berriwillock and Culgoa Pipeline	Water infrastructure upgrade
Lake boga Rail CSR works	Rail upgrade works
Goschen Rare Earths and Mineral Sands	Mineral Sands mining
Corack Wind Farm	Proposed wind farm to connect to VNI west

CHMP Fieldwork Summary 2024-2025

Total number of fieldwork days	217
Number of Wamba Wemba workers engaged	25
Male Wamba Wemba workers	16
Female Wamba Wemba workers	9

Cultural Ceremonies 2024-2025

Welcome to Country & Smoking Ceremony	11
Partners	• Local Government • State Government • Education • Private Sector

Governance and Corporate Performance

After cultural lore, governance is the backbone of the Corporation. Strong systems, policies, processes and people are essential to ensuring that the Corporation remains sustainable, compliant and accountable to our members.

Throughout 2024-2025, we made significant progress in building a full governance, finance and operational framework that supports both day-to-day operations and long-term planning. Key compliance mechanisms have been established, including a risk register, annual audit schedule and funding acquittal framework. These systems give the Board and community confidence that resources are being managed transparently and effectively.

A complete policy and procedure suite has been adopted. This includes clear guidance for membership processes, decision making, workplace health and safety, procurement, delegations and conflict of interest. Our workplace health and safety systems include formalised risk assessments, Safe Work Method Statements, Job Safety Analysis Sheets, incident and risk registers and regular toolbox meetings to keep staff informed and supported.

The physical safety of our employees is paramount and so too is their cultural, emotional and mental wellbeing. We have introduced paid cultural leave, flexible time off and internal wellbeing practices that prioritise balance and care. Our aim is not just to employ Wamba Wemba people but to support them to grow and thrive within the Corporation. That is why we have developed a professional development and career progression framework alongside our wellbeing policies. We want our people to learn, lead and shape the future of this organisation.

The current Board is made up of proud and committed Wamba Wemba people who give their time voluntarily. Despite having full-time careers and family responsibilities, they have prioritised the growth and governance of the Corporation. In 2024-2025, the Board held over 20 formal meetings and participated in more than 15 community events and engagements. Their dedication has provided the guidance and stability needed during this critical foundation year.

A significant challenge for the Corporation has been the formal adoption of required changes to our Rule Book. In 2024, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council directed the Corporation to reverse changes and return to a compliant governance structure, including the reinsertion of the apical ancestor list and development of a proper process for future changes.





While initially, we have experienced difficulty in holding Special General Meeting to formally adopt these changes, we now appear to have a clear path forward. These Rule Book amendments are essential to maintaining our Registered Aboriginal Party status and ensuring our legitimacy into the future.

With a small team of employees and growing expectations from developers, community and government, building a fully operational and culturally strong organisation has had its challenges.

At the same time as developing core systems, we have continued to meet our obligations under the Office of the Register of Indigenous Corporations, the Aboriginal Heritage Act and Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council's compliance standards. We continue to respond to regular requests for information, meetings and engagement from all sectors including government, developers, Councils and Traditional Owner groups. Meeting these demands while keeping the Corporation grounded in cultural values has required resilience and focus.

To meet these needs going forward, we must continue to build internal staff capacity. It is critical that we grow the size, skills and stability of the Corporation's team to ensure that all opportunities for Wamba Wemba people are maximised.

We must continue to invest in the board and the council of Gnerrick Gnerrick to ensure they continue to have the support to guide the corporation. So too must we continue to involve community in decision making and guiding the organisation.



Embedding Knowledge and Cultural Connection

In 2024-2025, the Corporation commenced planning to explore how Wamba Wemba knowledge and language can be embedded into local school curriculums and learning environments. This work will be guided by Gnerrick Gnerrick, educators and Community members to ensure that the approach is culturally grounded, meaningful and led by Wamba Wemba voices.

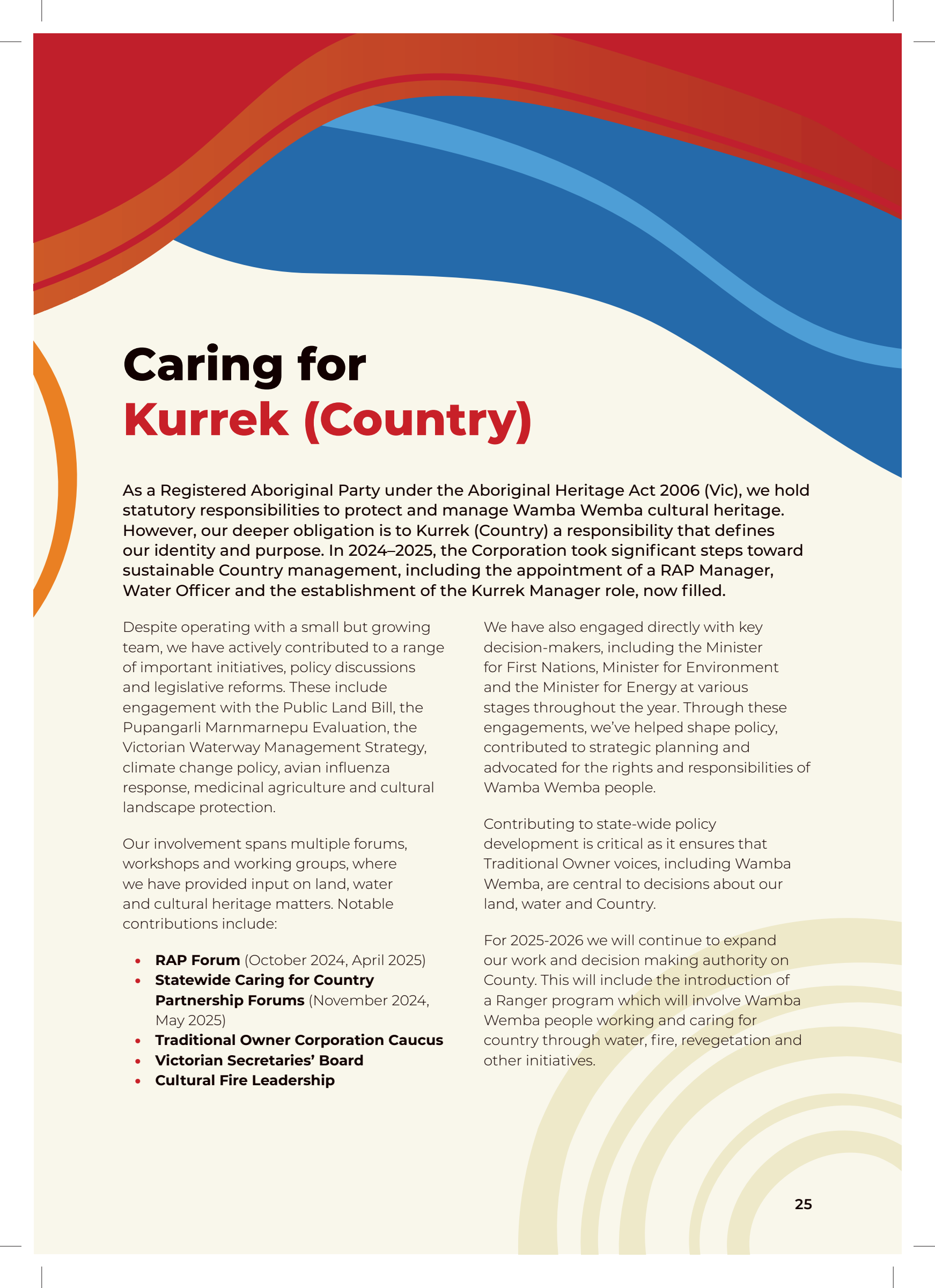
The aim is to create culturally responsive strategies and classroom ready resources that connect students to Wamba Wemba identity, stories and perspectives from early childhood through to secondary education. Community members told us that respect for culture must start early and be visible in the places where our children learn. You said that young people need cultural knowledge embedded in schools to build pride and a stronger sense of belonging. By embedding Wamba Wemba language and stories into the curriculum we can strengthen literacy, improve wellbeing and prepare the next generation for leadership, confidence and prosperity.

Alongside this initiative, the Corporation has also begun designing a calendar of cultural activities and community-based learning opportunities. These events will be delivered on Country and in local community spaces to support regular engagement with stories, ceremony and cultural knowledge.



This work reflects what community members have shared across many conversations. You told us that culture should not only be protected but actively lived and shared. You said cultural activities build pride, confidence and unity. You said regular gatherings and opportunities to learn from Gnerrick Gnerrick and one another improve wellbeing and strengthen identity across all ages.

Through this work the Corporation is creating safe and consistent opportunities for people to reconnect with culture and with each other. Together, these actions support the revitalisation of cultural knowledge and the creation of pathways for Wamba Wemba people, particularly our youth, into education, employment and leadership.



Caring for Kurrek (Country)

As a Registered Aboriginal Party under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic), we hold statutory responsibilities to protect and manage Wamba Wemba cultural heritage. However, our deeper obligation is to Kurrek (Country) a responsibility that defines our identity and purpose. In 2024–2025, the Corporation took significant steps toward sustainable Country management, including the appointment of a RAP Manager, Water Officer and the establishment of the Kurrek Manager role, now filled.

Despite operating with a small but growing team, we have actively contributed to a range of important initiatives, policy discussions and legislative reforms. These include engagement with the Public Land Bill, the Pupangarli Marnmarnepu Evaluation, the Victorian Waterway Management Strategy, climate change policy, avian influenza response, medicinal agriculture and cultural landscape protection.

Our involvement spans multiple forums, workshops and working groups, where we have provided input on land, water and cultural heritage matters. Notable contributions include:

- **RAP Forum** (October 2024, April 2025)
- **Statewide Caring for Country Partnership Forums** (November 2024, May 2025)
- **Traditional Owner Corporation Caucus**
- **Victorian Secretaries' Board**
- **Cultural Fire Leadership**

We have also engaged directly with key decision-makers, including the Minister for First Nations, Minister for Environment and the Minister for Energy at various stages throughout the year. Through these engagements, we've helped shape policy, contributed to strategic planning and advocated for the rights and responsibilities of Wamba Wemba people.

Contributing to state-wide policy development is critical as it ensures that Traditional Owner voices, including Wamba Wemba, are central to decisions about our land, water and Country.

For 2025-2026 we will continue to expand our work and decision making authority on Country. This will include the introduction of a Ranger program which will involve Wamba Wemba people working and caring for country through water, fire, revegetation and other initiatives.



Economic Self-Determination

Economic self-determination means having the authority and ability to make our own decisions about how Wamba Wemba people want to manage, use and benefit from our Country, culture and resources. It is about having control over the opportunities that are created on our land and ensuring that those opportunities benefit our people first. For Wamba Wemba people, economic self-determination is not just about income or employment. It is about healing from dispossession, restoring our right to govern our own affairs and creating futures that are culturally strong, independent and self-sustaining.

Community members have told us that they want the Corporation to focus on economic opportunities that increase our self-determination in all matters affecting our lives. You said we should be exploring pathways that allow us to build our own institutions, manage our own priorities and shape our own future. You told us that self-determination must be more than a principle. It must be practiced in everything from planning and negotiation to jobs, enterprise and access to land and resources.

When we build our own economies led by our own values, we strengthen community wellbeing. We create jobs that respect culture. We grow enterprises that give back

to families. We train our young people for leadership. We make decisions based on what is good for Country and what is good for Community. This is how prosperity flows from self-determination. Not only through money or markets, but through dignity, confidence and cultural control.

During 2024-2025, the Corporation focused on laying the foundation for this vision. We secured funding for feasibility studies, strategic planning and staff positions that will allow us to take informed steps toward economic opportunities. We started this work not because the answers are easy, but because we know the future must be built by us.

Renewable Energy Strategies

Building Strategic Readiness

During the 2024-2025 financial year, the Corporation began internal work on renewable energy strategy and readiness. This includes undertaking technical and strategic studies that will strengthen our ability to respond to the growing number of energy projects proposed on Wamba Wemba Country and across the broader region.

This work will help the Corporation build internal expertise and strengthen our governance capacity. It will ensure that we are not just reacting to proposals but are leading with vision, knowledge and cultural responsibility. These studies will support us to develop a clear and informed understanding of what future renewable energy projects may look like on Wamba Wemba Country. It will also provide the foundation for us to articulate our expectations and assert our rights with confidence.

As these industries expand across Victoria, Wamba Wemba people must not be left behind or sidelined. Developers, government agencies and investors must understand that Wamba Wemba Country is not simply open for extraction or commercial gain. It is cultural land and it must be treated with respect.

These studies will inform implementation roadmaps and will help the Corporation step into a leadership role, where we are positioned to proactively engage in planning processes, negotiate benefit sharing and ensure that any proposed project reflects our values and protects the Country it seeks to use.

By building our capacity in this space now, we are preparing the organisation and our members for a future in which renewable energy will play a significant role on our Country. Our goal is to make sure that future is fair, culturally safe and led by Wamba Wemba people.





Tourism Feasibility Study

In 2024-2025, the Corporation secured funding to explore the feasibility of developing sustainable cultural tourism experiences on Wamba Wemba Country. This work was initiated in direct response to community voices calling for meaningful opportunities that both protect culture and create income, jobs and pride.

We see cultural tourism as a potential pathway toward self-determination. It offers a way for Wamba Wemba people to share our stories, strengthen our economy and lead our own ventures in a way that respects Country and reflects our values. This is significant work and the Corporation is committed to doing everything we can to understand whether it can work in practice and, if so, how to make it succeed.

The feasibility study is not a commitment to launch a tourism business immediately. Rather, it is about undertaking careful

assessments to understand whether cultural tourism is viable, what model might deliver the best outcomes and what kind of training, partnerships or investment would be needed to do it well. The study will also help us identify which options can support intergenerational benefit and long-term community control. We are taking this step now because there is real need in our community and we must be strategic about where we invest time, energy and resources. Tourism is not the only economic opportunity available, but it is one that offers cultural, social and financial benefits if done properly. This work is about understanding the potential and preparing the ground for decisions based on evidence and cultural authority.

If the outcomes are positive, the Corporation will be ready to move forward in a way that benefits all our people and honours the strength of our ancestors.

Treaty Update and Readiness

Hello, I'm Lowana. I am a proud Wamba Wemba woman, deeply connected to my community and passionate about advocating for our rights and aspirations. As the granddaughter of Robert Moore-Taylor and Louisa Moore (nee Kirby) and the daughter of Louise Sinnappan (nee Moore), my heritage traces back to my apical ancestors, Robert Taylor and Mary Margaret Smith. Their legacy of cultural stewardship inspires me every day.

In March 2024, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria created a new reserved seat for Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation. I was honoured to be selected as the representative for our people and on 25 June 2024 I was formally appointed to the Assembly. The National Indigenous Times reported this historic moment, which marked a significant step forward in ensuring Wamba Wemba voices are included in the treaty-making process.

Since that time, with the support of the Corporation, members and Gnerrick Gnerrick, I have been regularly engaging with community. I have sat with families, spoken with young people and Elders and listened deeply to the aspirations of our people. These conversations have taken many forms including community forums, family gatherings, BBQs, cultural events, school visits and online surveys that reach those living both on and off Country. Each space has allowed people to ask questions, share ideas and express hopes for a fair and meaningful future through Treaty.

Over the past few months, there has been major progress at the state level. In September 2025, the Victorian Government and the First Peoples' Assembly reached in-principle agreement on a Statewide Treaty, the first of its kind in Australia. The Statewide Treaty Bill 2025 was then introduced to Parliament and, in October 2025, successfully passed the Lower House. The Bill sets out a framework to embed Aboriginal decision-making in law through a new statutory body known as Gellung Warl. This body will replace the current Assembly and ensure that Aboriginal voices remain permanently represented in how Victoria makes decisions about laws, services and priorities affecting our people.



Lowana Moore

Wamba Wemba Aboriginal
Corporation

Reserved Seat Holder for WWAC on
the First Peoples' Assembly



For Wamba Wemba, this progress means more than words on paper. It opens real and practical opportunities for change. Treaty has the potential to:

- Return decision-making power to our people, ensuring Wamba Wemba voices guide how health, education and cultural programs are designed and delivered on our Country.
- Support local Treaty negotiations that create pathways for agreements specific to our lands, water and heritage, including joint management of cultural sites and opportunities for on-Country employment through ranger and restoration programs.
- Deliver economic benefits through funding for Wamba Wemba-led enterprises, scholarships for young people and investment in community infrastructure.
- Promote truth-telling and cultural renewal through formal recognition of our stories, language and place names and by embedding local history in school curricula.

These outcomes will not happen overnight, but they show how Treaty can move from policy to practice, from negotiation tables to tangible change in our lives and our community.

Our conversations across Country show growing confidence and curiosity. People want to know what is possible. People want to lead. Increasingly, Wamba Wemba people are telling us they are ready to take the next step and not just understand Treaty, but explore how it can deliver lasting outcomes for our families, our culture and our Country.

We still have more work to do. I believe that by November 2025, we will be in a position to formally ask our members if they wish to enter negotiations for a Wamba Wemba Treaty. If our people decide yes, we will follow the proper steps of notifying the government, establishing negotiating structures and ensuring the process is culturally legitimate, transparent and grounded in the authority of our people.

This is a journey of self-determination and a journey of unity. It will be led by community every step of the way.

Update on the Yoorrook Justice Commission and Wamba Wemba Involvement

The Yoorrook Justice Commission, Australia's first truth-telling body with Royal Commission powers, released its final reports in July 2025. These two volumes, *Yoorrook for Transformation* and *Yoorrook: Truth Be Told*, formally document systemic injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria and offer 100 recommendations for broad structural reform. These range across land justice, legal systems, education, cultural heritage, health and self-determination.

Crucially, the Commission derives its name from the Wamba Wemba word "Yoorrook," meaning truth. This embeds Wamba Wemba language and cultural authority at the heart of a process now shaping Victoria's future. That act of naming reflects deep respect for Wamba Wemba epistemologies and sovereignty. It also marks a powerful linguistic and political shift: the first time a Royal Commission in Australia has been named using First Peoples' language.

Wamba Wemba Leadership and WWAC Board Contributions

Wamba Wemba leadership shaped the Yoorrook process at every level. Professor Eleanor Bourke AM, a proud Wergaia/Wamba Wemba Elder, served as Chair of the Yoorrook Justice Commission. Her direction helped ensure the inquiry reflected not only rigorous legal process but deep cultural grounding in First Peoples' law and truth-telling traditions.

At the community level, the Corporation played a vital role in the Commission's work. Several board members actively participated. Lisa Thorpe served as a Yoorrook Truth Receiver, helping community members record and submit their stories to the Commission in culturally safe ways.

Lowana Moore submitted a public video testimony discussing the importance of embedding First Peoples' truth in Victorian education and cultural systems. Nakia Firebrace appeared as a witness during the Commission's 2022 Criminal Justice System hearings, presenting evidence in his role at the Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency. Jason Kelly supported formal submissions and broader community engagement.

These contributions ensured that Wamba Wemba voices, from governance to grassroots, were reflected in the public record and informed recommendations for structural reform.



Beyond organisational and board representation, numerous Wamba Wemba individuals came forward to share their truths through personal submissions to the Commission. These included community members who reflected on identity, family and cultural disconnection; A member of the Stolen Generations who spoke of institutional trauma and healing; and a community member, who provided a video submission highlighting the importance of truth-telling in education and cultural understanding.

Their stories expressed the pain of cultural disconnection, the legacy of removal policies and the impact of systemic racism. Others highlighted the strength and survival of Wamba Wemba identity, including stories of cultural revival and reconnection to language and Country. This narrative, from grief to resistance to healing, runs throughout Wamba Wemba contributions and helped shape the Commission's broader understanding of intergenerational harm and resilience.

Wamba Wemba peoples also contributed substantially through formal hearings and evidence sessions. Elders, researchers, cultural leaders and community workers appeared before the Commission to speak to injustices in areas of child protection, cultural records, health and land access.



Testimonies were grounded in lived experience and often reflected a profound commitment to future generations. In particular, the voices of Wamba Wemba women and Elders emerged powerfully, calling for data sovereignty, local cultural control and the recognition of deep historical trauma. These public testimonies now stand as enduring records of truth, archived for future generations.

Other Wamba Wemba Elders and knowledge holders were acknowledged throughout the Commission's work. Aunty Carolyn Briggs provided a dedicated submission detailing her journey in activism, education and cultural leadership, affirming her long-standing commitment to justice, power and pride. Aunty Wendy Brabham was recognised in Yoorrook's interim report as a leading Wamba Wemba educator and cultural advocate.

Legacy and Looking Forward

The final reports explicitly reference Wamba Wemba Country, leaders and stories. The corporation submission was cited in relation to land injustice and traditional ownership. Individual testimonies were used to illustrate experiences of institutional harm.

Perhaps most significantly, the Commission's very name, Yoorrook, will forever honour Wamba Wemba language and worldview.

This legacy affirms the strength of Wamba Wemba people and their central place in Victoria's truth-telling journey. As the state moves toward Treaty and systemic reform, the contributions of Wamba Wemba Elders, leaders, youth and organisations will remain foundational to what comes next. The Yoorrook reports may have been completed, but the truth it uncovered continues to shape the future.



Organisational Development & Workforce Capacity



Throughout 2024-2025, the Corporation continued to invest in building a strong, skilled and culturally grounded team. The Corporation implemented key policies for human resources, work health and safety, finance, governance, onboarding and cultural safety. We have introduced paid cultural leave, flexible time off and internal wellbeing practices that support balance and care.

Our focus is not only to employ Wamba Wemba people but to support them to grow and thrive within the Corporation. This is why we developed a career progression and professional development framework that works alongside our cultural and wellbeing priorities. We want Wamba Wemba people to lead, to shape the future of this Corporation and to take pride in the workplace we are building together.

This 2024-25 financial year, staff have participated in training with La Trobe University, Swinburne University and the Australian Institute of Management. Many team members engaged in peer-to-peer mentoring, with experienced staff supporting the development of others. This culture of knowledge sharing and care is essential to growing a strong Wamba Wemba workforce and expanding leadership opportunities within the Corporation.

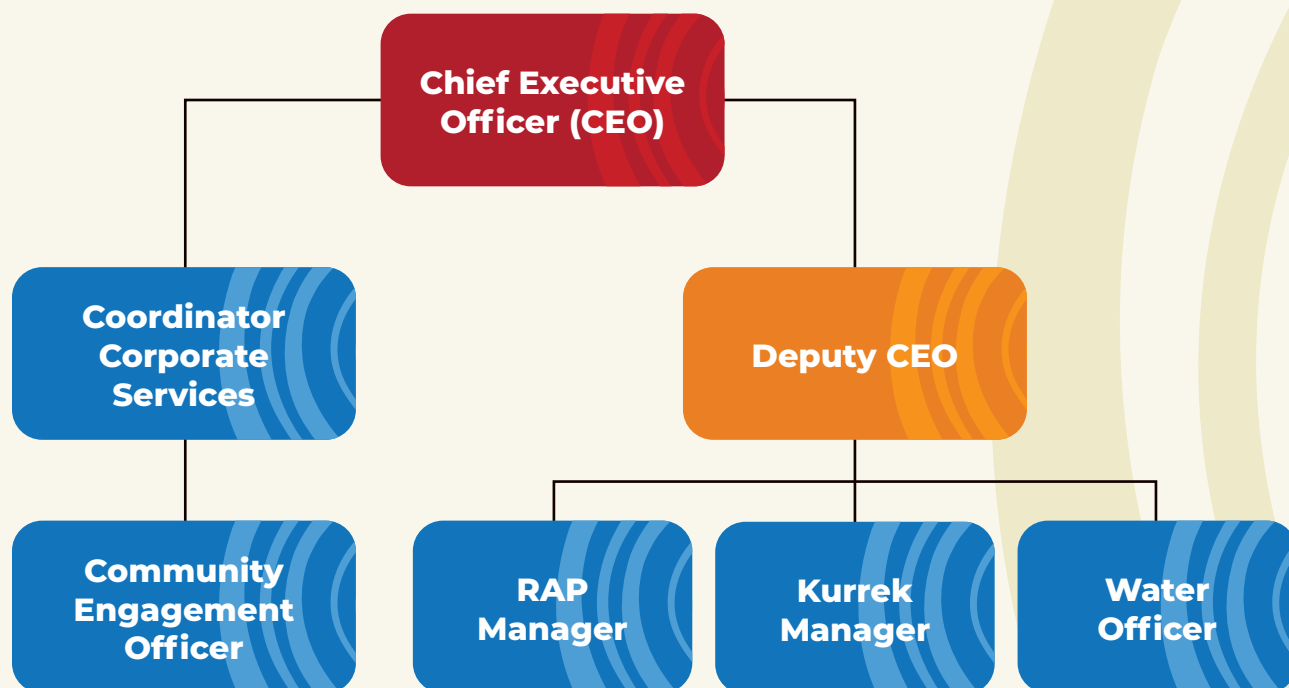
We are also adopting flexible and innovative employment practices. Some employees are engaging with the Corporation on a casual basis while managing other family and

community responsibilities. This approach supports people to build confidence, develop skills and grow into part-time or full-time roles in a way that reflects their journey.

At the same time, we recognise the challenge of standing up new programs while also strengthening our governance, financial and operational systems. Our aim is to grow steadily and responsibly, ensuring we have the internal capability to deliver on community expectations while building long-term sustainability.

One key element of this development was signing the lease to our first ever Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation office at 246 Campbell Street Swan Hill and employing the Corporation's first employees.

We know there is more to do. We will continue to focus on employees, leadership pathways and creating further opportunities for Wamba Wemba people to be employed, mentored and supported to succeed. This is about building a strong organisation and an even stronger future for our community.





Community Engagement Summary

During the 2024-2025 year we held a number of community activities. These included activities ran by the Corporation, as well as events hosted by our partners that we supported. Some of these events included:

NAIDOC events

Family Day, Elders Lunch
and Movie Night

Children's Day

Event at Lake Boga

**Governance meetings -
Annual General
Meeting**

Recreational activities

Including supporting weekly
attendance at the Swan Hill Pool
for families over the summer break

Engagement visits

With representative bodies including Victorian
State Government agencies, Swan Hill Rural
City Council, North Central Catchment
Management Authority,

In total, there were in excess of 300 people attending these events, with a mixture of youth, Elders, Wamba Wemba members and members of the broader community. We welcomed 38 new members to the Corporation.

We look forward to developing more opportunities to engage with and involve community.

Looking Ahead

At the time of publishing this Annual Report, the Wamba Wemba Aboriginal Corporation was undertaking a number of significant initiatives that would shape the next chapter of its journey. In 2025–2026, the Corporation commenced community consultations to inform the development of its Strategic Plan 2026–2030. These engagements were planned across Wamba Wemba Country and beyond, including Swan Hill, Bendigo, Shepparton, Melbourne and Deniliquin.

Through these consultations, the Corporation invited community members to share what they wanted for their families, what they envisioned for the Corporation and how they wanted it to feel. This process was about listening deeply to community voices. The feedback and input gathered through these engagements is being used to shape the Strategic Plan, a plan that reflects what members say is important, what their aspirations are and what they want the Corporation to stand for.

The Strategic Plan will be a direct expression of member priorities and cultural values. It will guide how the Corporation grows, where it invests and how it remains true to culture in everything it does. It is not just a document it is the community telling the Corporation what matters and how to move forward together.

In parallel with the consultations, the Corporation continued progressing major priority areas identified by members. These included Treaty, native title, cultural heritage protection, cultural tourism and education.



The Corporation also advanced its work on training and employment pathways, supporting Wamba Wemba people into ranger roles, heritage and land management positions and next year with the evolving economic landscape. Whether working on Country, in renewables, or in planning and negotiation roles, the Corporation aim to ensure its people are prepared, supported and proud of their contributions.

The Corporation remains open. It will continue to seek better ways to hear from members.

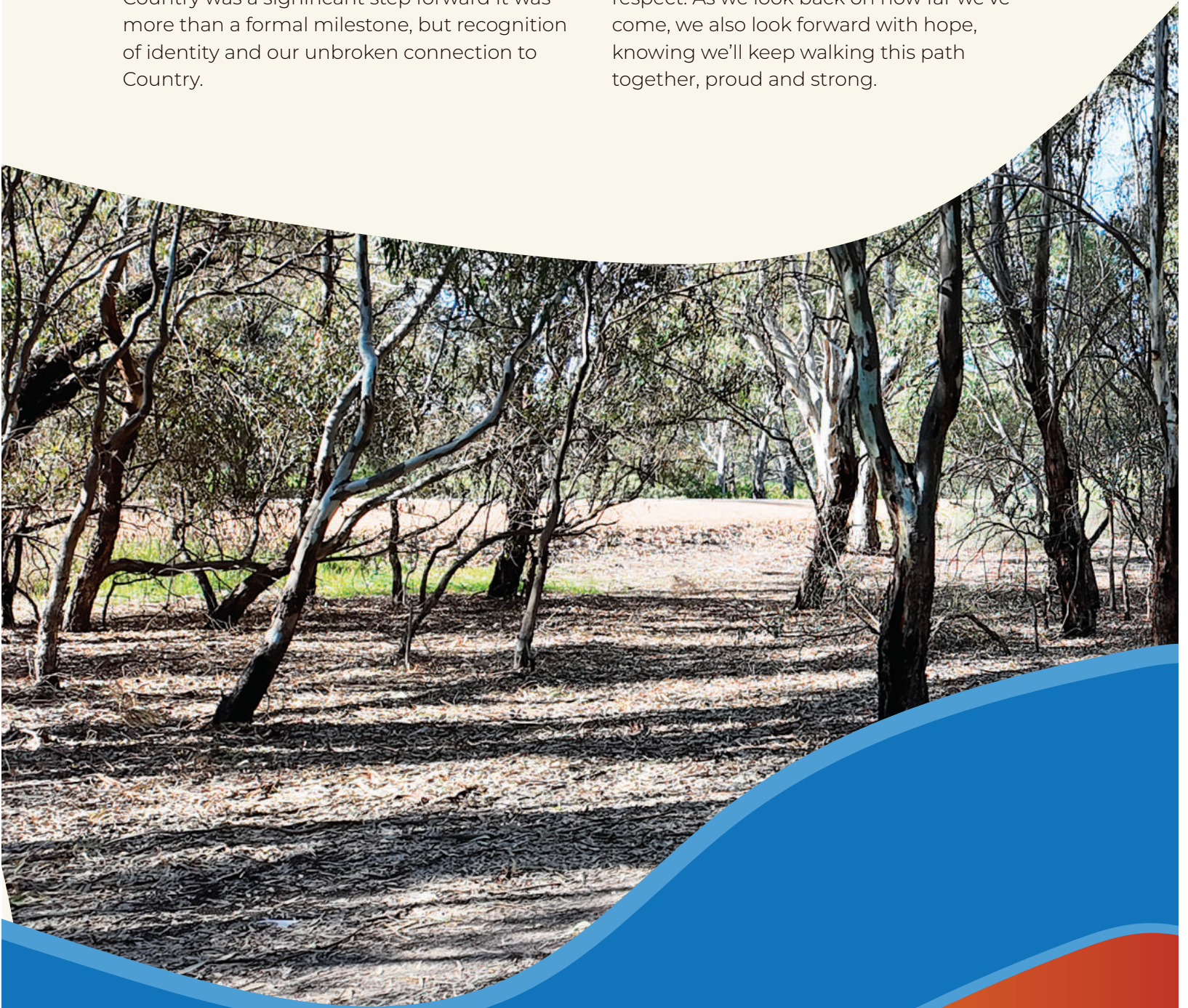
This was, and remains, your Corporation. It must continue to be community-led, grounded in cultural lore, respectful of one another, reverent to the knowledge of Gnerrick Gnerrick and aligned with our shared strategic priorities.

Acknowledgements & Closing

The journey toward formal recognition hasn't been easy and for more than 20 years, the Wamba Wamba community has had to show perseverance and commitment.

There have been ups and downs, but the community has stayed focused on the goal. Achieving RAP status in Victoria for part of our Country was a significant step forward. It was more than a formal milestone, but recognition of identity and our unbroken connection to Country.

The work now begins. We need to honour those who are no longer with us, by treating all of our community with kindness and respect. As we look back on how far we've come, we also look forward with hope, knowing we'll keep walking this path together, proud and strong.







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