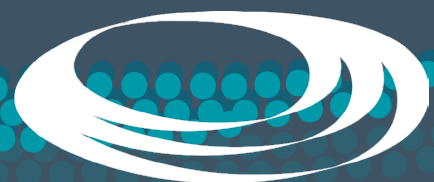


Victorian Water Industry
**Recognising and
Managing for
Aboriginal Values**

February 2020



VicWater
BETTER TOGETHER

Contents

Acknowledgement	3
Acronyms used in this report	4
Introduction	5
Water for Victoria	5
Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF)	5
Content of this report	5
Water For Victoria	6
Action 6.1 Recognise Aboriginal values and objectives in water	6
Integrated Water Management (IWM) Forums	6
Country Plans, Management Plans and Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs)	7
Cultural flow assessments and cultural values studies	8
Other projects	9
Case Study – Working Together	11
Case Study – First Nations Artwork Project	12
Action 6.2 Considering Aboriginal values in water planning and management	14
Aboriginal Waterway Assessments (AWAs)	14
Traditional ecological knowledge	15
Traditional Owner engagement	16
Aboriginal water officers	18
Case Study – Aboriginal Water Officer at Gippsland Water	19
Case Study – Cultural Burning at Western Treatment Plant	20
Case Study – Goulburn Valley Water and Community	22
Action 6.3 Aboriginal access to water for economic development	24
Case Study – Opportunistic One-Off Water Transfers for Aboriginal and Environmental Values	25

Action 6.4 Building jobs and capacity	26
Case Study – Killara Kooyang Project	28
Action 10.8 Increase Aboriginal inclusion in the water sector	29
Cultural awareness training	29
RAPs and Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) strategies	31
Aboriginal vocational education and traineeships	31
Case Study – Learning Together	32
Case Study – Indigenous Inductions	33
Case Study – From Trainee To Employee	34
Action 10.9 Support economic development through Aboriginal participation	35
Aboriginal business opportunities	35
Social procurement	36
Cross-cultural learning	37
Aboriginal employment	38
Case Study – Yaluk Biik Baan	40
Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework	42
Case Study – Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) and Gippsland Environmental Agencies (GEA)	43
Case Study – Improving Water Quality in the Framlingham Community	44
Conclusion	45

Acknowledgement

Victorian water corporations and VicWater recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations of this country. We proudly acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the lands and waterways on which we work and live, and pay respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We recognise and value the continuing rich cultures and contributions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to the Victorian community.

Acronyms used in this report

AIP	Aboriginal Inclusion Plan
AWA	Aboriginal Waterway Assessment
BLCAC	Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
CMA	Catchment Management Authority
CPA	Catchment Partnership Agreement
D&I	Diversity & Inclusion
DELWP	Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
DTF	Department of Treasury and Finance
EMAC	Eastern Marr Aboriginal Corporation
GEA	Gippsland Environmental Agencies
GLaWAC	Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
GMTOAC	Guditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
HR	Human Resources
IWM	Integrated Water Management
MLDRIN	Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations
NRM	Natural Resource Management
RAP	Reconciliation Action Plan
VEWH	Victorian Environmental Water Holder

Introduction

Water for Victoria

Water for Victoria is the Victorian Government's strategic plan for management of Victoria's water resources to support a healthy environment, prosperous economy and thriving communities.

Chapter 6 of Water for Victoria sets out the Victorian Government's objective for recognising the values that water has for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians. To fulfil this objective the water sector will "support Aboriginal participation in Victorian water planning and management frameworks through consultative structures that address the rights and interests of Victoria's Traditional Owners" and "incorporate Aboriginal customary knowledge, where appropriate, into water management, and assist Traditional Owners to plan for, and adapt to, the impacts of climate change". Chapter 6 includes three actions (6.1-6.4) relating to recognising Aboriginal values in water and incorporating them in water planning and management, providing access to water for Aboriginal economic development and building jobs and capacity.

Chapter 10 in Water for Victoria addresses the Victorian Government's objective for the water sector to support jobs, economic growth and innovation. To fulfil this objective, the water sector will "partner with Aboriginal Victorians ... to increase opportunities for Aboriginal employment, cultural wellbeing and economic self-determination". Chapter 10 includes two actions (10.8 and 10.9) relating to increasing Aboriginal inclusion and supporting economic development through Aboriginal participation.

Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework (VAAF)

The VAAF is the Victorian Government's over-arching framework for working with Aboriginal Victorians, organisations and the wider community to progress change across government, address inequity and deliver stronger outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians. Goal 18 of the VAAF is that "Aboriginal land, water and cultural rights are recognised" and the pertinent measure (18.1.7) for water corporations is the number of formal partnership agreements for planning and management with Aboriginal communities.

Content of this report

This report provides an overview of initiatives and activities that water corporations are undertaking to support Aboriginal inclusion, participation, engagement and employment in the Victorian water sector, in line with the relevant actions and measures in Water for Victoria and the VAAF.

The report is organised to correspond to relevant sections in Water for Victoria and the VAAF, noting that many of the initiatives and activities described relate to more than one section.

Water For Victoria

Action 6.1 Recognise Aboriginal values and objectives in water

Victorian water corporations are working with Traditional Owners through a number of different mechanisms and projects that are designed to identify local Aboriginal water values, uses and objectives and incorporate cultural objectives into water management and planning.

Integrated Water Management (IWM) Forums

IWM Forums around Victoria provide opportunities for water corporations to support, engage and collaborate with Traditional Owners in relation to water management and planning.

Together with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), Wannon Water convenes the Great South Coast IWM Forum and practitioner workshops. Traditional Owners are invited to all Forum meetings and IWM practitioner workshops, and there have been one-on-one meetings between the CEOs of Guditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC) and Eastern Marr Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) with the Chair of the Great South Coast IWM Forum. This engagement has resulted in:

- two 30 minute presentations from GMTOAC about their vision for landscape restoration and economic development opportunities for the Buj Bim World Heritage area
- direct Traditional Owner input for drafting the vision for the Great South Coast IWM Forum
- language from GMTOAC and EMAC featuring on the opening page of the Forum's Strategic Directions Statement interpreting aspects of the Vision.

Melbourne Water and Yarra Valley Water have provided co-funding to the Wurundjeri Water Unit to enable it to participate in IWM planning across Melbourne. The Water Unit is small and needs assistance to build its

capacity and number of staff to be able to fully participate in future water planning.

Coliban Water has assisted in facilitating and hosting the DELWP-run Coliban IWM Forum involving Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Yorta Yorta.

The North East IWM, which North East Water is part of, has committed to engaging Aboriginal communities in IWM as a key project, through generating knowledge and developing a deeper understanding around engaging with different Traditional Owners and broader Aboriginal communities in the North East.

The East Gippsland IWM Forum, which includes East Gippsland Water, has instigated a project led by the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority (CMA) focused on supporting Aboriginal water values in East Gippsland – the first stage of this project is currently underway.

The Central Highlands Region IWM Forum, chaired by Central Highlands Water, includes representatives of Wathaurung/Dja Dja Wurrung and has led to the development of several IWM projects where Traditional Owners are project partners. The Traditional Owners of the Maryborough area (Dja Dja Wurrung) were engaged in the development of the Maryborough IWM plan. The Traditional Owners of the Hepburn Shire (Dja Dja Wurrung) are engaged in the development of the Hepburn Shire IWM plan.

Country Plans, Management Plans and Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs)

Traditional Owner Country Plans, management plans and water corporation RAPs provide an important documentary foundation for meaningful Aboriginal engagement and partnership within the water industry.

Melbourne Water is supporting three Traditional Owners (Wurundjeri, Wathaurung and Bunurong) within its operating area to complete Country Plans and implement and promote values and aspirations from Country Plans. South East Water and Yarra Valley Water are also supporting the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) via funding for its Country Plan, which will identify areas of significance and also incorporate cultural water values that will feed into the next sub-catchment planning of Gardiners/Koonung Creeks.

Goulburn Murray Water continues to work with Yorta Yorta Nation on implementing actions within the Kow (Ghow) Swamp Land and On-Water Management Plan, supporting the surveying and development of the Conservation Management Plan that will inform the proposed Protection Declaration Area. Goulburn Murray Water has also engaged with Yorta Yorta on the review of the Lower Ovens Groundwater Management Plan to incorporate cultural and environmental values into the plan. Goulburn Murray Water is liaising with Taungurung Land and Water Council on reviewing the Greens Lake Land and On-Water Management Plan, including future management opportunities and how Taungurung can provide services to conserve the site. Goulburn Murray Water is also engaged with Dhuduroa on the development of the Dartmouth Land and On-Water Management Plan.

Through its RAP, Barwon Water is delivering a Working with Traditional Owners to Care for Country project to further incorporate Traditional Owner practices and knowledge into their ecological knowledge and water planning and management.

Westernport Water completed its first RAP in May 2019 and is currently engaging on its Innovate RAP, through which it has supported community and local events (refer to case study). Central Highlands Water released its Reflect RAP in January 2019 and is currently developing an Innovate RAP which will be released in mid-2020. Coliban Water is also delivering on commitments from its Reflect RAP. Lower Murray Water launched its RAP in July 2019.

Yarra Valley Water is in the process of signing off with Reconciliation Australia its Stretch RAP (2020-2022), which will be its second RAP. The Stretch RAP will continue to build on the foundation of the relationships that it has built with Traditional Owner organisations, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and businesses.

Gippsland Regional Alliance (which includes the four Gippsland-based water corporations) has a formal agreement with the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) which details ways in which communication, interaction and support of cultural and economic values are upheld. GLaWAC has informed the Alliance that its preference is to have one agreement with the regional authorities as a collective rather than individual RAPs as they don't have the resources or means to work with the individual corporations.

Cultural flow assessments and cultural values studies

A number of water corporations are undertaking cultural flow assessments and cultural values studies to identify areas of cultural value and sensitivity for waterways within their operational areas, to assist with future management and planning.

Melbourne Water's Bolin flow determination and cultural values study with Wurundjeri has been completed, leading to capital works and a Narrap Team water quality and cultural ecology monitoring program. South East Water is running a research project (approximately \$50,000) detailing cultural value/sensitivity data for the Koo Wee Rup Wetland area. Westernport Water has also completed an Aboriginal cultural heritage study to identify areas of cultural sensitivity across the corporation's service area. Central Highlands Water has supported a study of cultural flows in the Yarrawee/Leigh Creek catchment, in conjunction with Corangamite CMA and Wathaurung Traditional Owners.

Gippsland Water is working in partnership with GLaWAC to capture the culture values of the waterways that it extracts from and discharges into. GLaWAC is leading the Nindie Yan Yarning (Our Water Talk) project to capture the stories and values of waterways in Gippsland and includes the waterways in their operational area. In 2020 a members of GLaWAC will be seconded to Gippsland Water to assist in integrating these values into the business.

Goulburn Murray Water supports the development of the Kow (Ghow) Swamp Conservation Management Plan that investigates specific threats to sites of cultural significance, be it land use, pest plant and animal and water regime.

Yarra Valley Water's Place-Based Planning Unit works closely with the Wurundjeri Water Unit manager in undertaking cultural flow assessments for the Merri Creek Upper IWM. The cultural flows assessment will identify areas of cultural value to Traditional Owners as well as incorporating opportunities for socio-economic impact and direct benefits. The assessment methodology is used to identify Traditional Owner water values, and utilise the vision and objectives of the Traditional Owners in the future planning and management of the values. Wurundjeri are supported in the development of the assessment so that their aspirations for the sub-catchment are not only realised, they are also implemented. Over the 2018-19 financial year Yarra Valley Water's total expenditure for this project, as well as the other support for Wurundjeri Woiwurrung and BLCAC referred to above, was \$274,799.72. This amount also includes an Aboriginal consultant to assist capacity building with cultural flows assessment.

Other projects

The following projects, currently underway or recently completed, also demonstrate how Victorian water corporations are working to recognise and incorporate Aboriginal values into water management and planning.

- City West Water, Melbourne Water and Western Water are proud partners of the Greening the West project which has recently started to incorporate First Nations values regarding how water is used to support greening of the land – an external contractor is currently leading the First Nations part of this work.
- Waterways of the West is another collective project (managed by DELWP) with the water industry, Traditional Owner groups and the First Nations community to look at the health of the rivers of the West and what First Nations values are being used to support the management of those rivers going forward.
- Wurundjeri Water Unit is working with Melbourne Water on seasonal watering proposals to extend in 2020, and Melbourne Water also supports Wurundjeri Woiwurrung to lead their Merri Creek project and investigation into freshwater mussels.
- Coliban Water is working with Dja Dja Wurrung to design and install a shelter at one of their reservoirs that will identify local Aboriginal values and history. Coliban Water has also recently updated signage around their reservoirs and included reference to the Dja Dja Wurrung Country Plan on the signs.
- Central Highlands Water is currently working with Traditional Owners to identify scar trees on Central Highland Water land assets, and redesigning signage in parks and catchment assets to acknowledge Traditional Owners and any culturally significant sites/stories attached to the land.
- Western Water is engaging with Melton City Council and Wadawurrung on the potential for a memorial site on Western Water land.
- South Gippsland Water is supporting the community program to paint the Port Albert water tower with mural artwork. The original brief was developed in consultation with Gunaikurnai and Indigenous themes are included in the concept design.
- City West Water's First Nations Artwork project incorporates First Nations values for water across five of its assets (refer to case study).
- Barwon Water's Porronggitj Karrong project with Wadawurrung is looking at using traditional land owner management techniques to manage a large parcel of land.

- Goulburn Murray Water is working with Yorta Yorta Nation, Parks Victoria and the Goulburn Broken CMA on nominating Kanyapella Basin for an environmental watering. This site is now listed within the Seasonal Watering Plan and works are underway to explore conducting a cool cultural burn on the key waterway delivery network that is congested with cumbungi (aquatic weed) to ensure more efficient delivery of water and promote the growth of medicinal plants within the waterway.
- During 2018-19 Wannon Water supported local projects including a video presentation on Budj Bim hosted and narrated by GMTOAC and the Aboriginal water officer at Glenelg Hopkins CMA for Wannon Water employees regarding the value of cultural water, and participation in the Catchment Partnership Agreement Aboriginal Engagement project facilitated by Wadawurrung at Barwon Water.



Case Study – Working Together

Westernport Water is proud of its reconciliation journey to date. Through care, courage and commitment, Westernport Water is contributing to a better future for its community through its Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). Following the completion of its first Reflect RAP in May 2019, Westernport Water is engaging with its RAP Working Group to co-develop its second plan under the Reconciliation Australia framework.

The RAP is an expression of Westernport Water's commitment to unite with First Nations People and give voice to the true history of the area it services. Westernport Water recognises the Bunurong Peoples as the Traditional Custodians of its area and their longstanding role in the sustainable management of the land and water resources.

Westernport Water's RAP Working Group has both internal and external Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives and includes members from the Registered Aboriginal Party the Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, Yowengarra Bun Wurrung Balug Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Traditional Custodians and local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members living on Country as well as Westernport Water's Leadership Team and employees from across the organisation.

Westernport Water's progress towards learning, understanding, and delivering real outcomes for the local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Community has been strongly supported by its Board, which includes Rueben Berg as its longest serving Director and Deputy Chair. Rueben Berg is a Gunditjmara man and passionate about the inclusion of Aboriginal values in water management. Rueben is also a Commissioner for the Victorian Environmental Water Holder (VEWH) and Member of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

Over the last 18 months, Westernport Water has delivered the following in partnership with its RAP Working Group:

- established the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network with Phillip Island Nature Parks, Bass Coast Shire Council, Bass Coast Health and the South Gippsland Reconciliation Group to facilitate a regional approach to reconciliation
- provided Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural awareness training to all employees
- successfully created and maintained an Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander traineeship
- developed Working Together Protocols and Guidelines to empower employees to raise awareness and provide recognition to Traditional Owners with confidence
- promoted and demonstrated a strong public commitment to reconciliation through employee email signatures, magnetic reconciliation signs on all fleet vehicles, billboards through the community, and a social media campaign.

Case Study – First Nations Artwork Project

City West Water and SALT Studio have worked together to turn plain, often graffitied, electrical cabinets into beautiful works of First Nations art.

It has become somewhat standard practice for asset owners to transform unremarkable, often ugly, cabinets into art. At City West Water we thought we could take this practice a step further into the win-win territory and use the space to specifically showcase First Nations art. This view sits in line with our reconciliation journey at City West Water and adds to creating safe and welcoming spaces. These works of art allows us to engage and interact with the public via the story and concepts that SALT Studio created for City West Water.

For First Nations peoples, the sharing of culture and lore is traditionally passed on through song, dance, art and creation stories. Using these cabinets as a different platform to share the same knowledge was identified as a great opportunity. Therefore, City West Water engaged SALT Studio to turn the cabinets into beautiful visual stories sharing knowledge of First Nations culture. Three First Nation female artist from SALT Studio developed the story concept of the water warrior themed around water, land, ceremony, totems, community and implemented the designs onto the five cabinets.

Example: Cabinet 2 – Trees

The second cabinet adorned by the three SALT Studio artists is at Fels Park in Yarraville. This small park is very important to the community here and is always filled with families and people looking to enjoy a slice of nature. There are several native trees in this park which provide this valuable experience. Therefore, the second cabinet showcases art around the significance of trees in First Nations culture.

The images on this cabinet express the importance of connecting to country for First Nations peoples. But also where our lores are held and passed through the generations. The scar trees painted here highlight that First Nation knowledge comes from the roots and is carried and shared, and that our scar trees need to be protected and not harmed.

On this cabinet the water warrior is painted on the side of the cabinet so that she looks on to the park, her hand holds on to the roots of the tree where knowledge is held. On the other side of the cabinet is another image of the scar tree using sea of hands signifying that we are all responsible for protecting country and that we must give back to country for future generations to continue its care. After all, “our trees are sacred” and “our sacred trees hold our sacred lore”.



Action 6.2 Considering Aboriginal values in water planning and management

Water corporations are using Aboriginal Waterway Assessments and other tools to incorporate traditional ecological knowledge into water planning and management, and a variety of methods for engaging with Traditional Owners to achieve shared benefits. Some water corporations are also supporting Aboriginal water officers through direct or indirect means.

Aboriginal Waterway Assessments (AWAs)

An AWA is an assessment methodology that uses a consistent set of questions and ratings to Traditional Owners to assess the cultural health of their Country and set priorities for environmental water delivery. A number of water corporations are involved in AWA processes.

Coliban Water has engaged Dja Dja Wurrung to undertake an AWA of the Coliban River. Work is also underway to develop an AWA for the Campaspe River which is being undertaken by both Dja Dja Wurrung and Tuangurung.

Western Water is contributing \$20,000 to Dja Dja Wurrung and Tuangurung to undertake an AWA of Five Mile Creek (part of the Campaspe catchment) with links to the Coliban IWM Forum. Western Water is also advocating for AWAs to be undertaken for the Werribee and Maribyrnong Rivers through the IWM Forums. Western Water sees these tools as of significant importance as they provide the dataset for collaborative planning. If this knowledge is not documented, collaborative planning is difficult.

Melbourne Water is investigating an AWA with Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri Woiwurrung, and is also developing methodologies to inform and seek advice from Bunurong, Boon Wurrung, Wurundjeri and Wadawurrung regarding their ongoing aspirations for knowledge or involvement in cultural flows. Discussions are underway for an AWA (Wadawurrung Werribee), cultural flows assessment (Wurundjeri Upper Merri) and cultural values study (Wurundjeri Yarra / Bolin Bolin).

Goulburn Murray Water has pledged to support multiple Traditional Owner groups in the development of proposed AWAs, including committing technical support to Traditional Owner ecological knowledge in water planning.

Traditional ecological knowledge

In addition to AWAs, some water corporations are using different ways of incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into their businesses.

Yarra Valley Water includes Traditional Owner ecological knowledge into water planning and management through place-based planning in IWM at a sub-catchment level. The methodology used to incorporate this knowledge is undertaken in similar means to AWAs via cultural flows assessments. Yarra Valley Water is in the process of trialling this in the Upper Merri Creek sub-catchment area and should this become the preferred methodology by Traditional Owner organisations, it will be adopted across all the Yarra Valley Water sub-catchments.

Wannon Water incorporates traditional ecological knowledge into water planning and management using AWAs and other tools developed by Traditional Owners by the use of Cultural Heritage Management Plans. During 2018-19 Wannon Water conducted six Cultural Heritage Management Plans in relation to:

- Warrnambool Sewage Treatment Plant upgrade
- Portland Wind Energy generator foundation
- Hopkins River, Warrnambool pipe crossing
- Hamilton Biosolids Facility new drying area
- Harris Street trunk sewer duplication Warrnambool (stage two)
- servicing the 12 Apostles Visitor Centre.

Barwon Water is currently working with Wadawurrung to implement traditional land and water management practices at one of its sites. South East Water's in-house ecologist has been compiling a database for traditional ecological knowledge in its region for use on future capital projects. Westernport Water is developing a project to amend flow releases and timings for environmental gains to support traditional ecological practices.

Melbourne Water is developing a Cultural Fire Plan with Traditional Owner support and involvement (refer to case study). Goulburn Murray Water attended a National Firestick Workshop at Barmah National Park to better understand the use of fire in the landscape to heal country, prevent blackwater events and complement environmental water delivery. Goulburn Murray Water owns and manages large parcels of land surrounding storages in Northern Victoria and is looking to implement these initiatives at Kanyapella Basin.

Traditional Owner engagement

Water corporations are working to establish meaningful, long-term relationships with Traditional Owners through various means of engagement, guided by the needs and capacity of the Traditional Owner groups within their service areas.

Gippsland Water has an internal working party across the organisation to implement initiatives within the business. The working party supports Aboriginal employment and procurement across Gippsland and works directly with GLaWAC on key projects including Ninde Yan Yarning (Our Water Talk), AWAs which will map the cultural values of waterways in the Gippsland Water operational area, cultural heritage management planning and artefact repatriation.

In 2018 Goulburn Valley Water established a leadership group with Yorta Yorta emerging leaders which resulted in a number of actions and projects that are currently underway (refer to case study). Goulburn Murray Water has attended Barapa Wamba Water for Country Workshops, a Dja Dja Wurrung Healthy Country Workshop, Dja Dja Wurrung Recognition and Settlement Agreement/Land Use Activity Agreement Workshop. Goulburn Murray Water also presented to the Murray Stewardship Program at Yarrawonga hosted by Murray Lower Darling Rivers Indigenous Nations (MLDRIN).

Southern Rural Water is working with DELWP, MLDRIN and others across the southern half of Victoria to explore opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians to become more engaged in water management and to better understand their aspirations. This has included senior leaders participating in workshops in 2019-20 with Traditional Owners on policy and processes in water management. In a region that includes six existing Registered Aboriginal Parties and other language groups seeking recognition, Southern Rural Water seeks to replicate the multi-agency model and develop or join existing partnerships with Traditional Owner groups alongside other water corporations, CMAs and public sector organisations involved in natural resource management (NRM).

Yarra Valley Water works with Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians to achieve shared benefits including socio-economic benefits that derive from land and water management. Across the business, conversations happen weekly with Traditional Owner organisations to discuss co-design and management opportunities. Traditional Owners have expressed an interest in developing an economic mussels enterprise that will also benefit the waterways of the Merri Creek catchment. Including this aspiration in the cultural flows assessment and supporting the development of the enterprise is of mutual benefit to the Traditional Owners, the broader community that utilises the catchment and Yarra Valley Water. Yarra Valley Water has also recently collaborated with Wurudjeri Woiwurrung in developing its RAP to ensure that the aspirations of Wurundjeri in water management are reflected.

Melbourne Water engages directly with Traditional Owners across all five catchment regions through Healthy Waterway Strategy co-design and now co-delivery. The Healthy Waterway Strategy has seven co-designed regional performance objectives. Melbourne Water is encouraging a Traditional Owner

Advisory Panel to support Healthy Waterway Strategy co-delivery and networking with other water industry leaders to support Traditional Owner goals and aspirations collaboratively.

In 2018-19 Wannon Water commenced and continued engagement with Traditional Owners to achieve shared benefits through the Killara Kooyang project, Gellibrand Summer Flows project and Albert Park IWM Plan.

South East Water conducted two projects this year involving engagement with BLCAC regarding potential shared benefits, the Ranelagh Sewer Main cultural recognition project (\$10,000) and Boneo Water Recycling Plant green team yard (\$20,000).

Western Water is regularly engaging with Traditional Owners on feasibility studies, Western Irrigation Network, Water Grid Expansion, Sunbury's Water Future, IWM options for Western Growth, and additional flows for environmental and cultural benefit in the Werribee River. These projects link with the Maribyrnong and Werribee IWM Forums.

Coliban Water and Dja Dja Wurrung meet on a monthly basis to discuss planning and management.

Aboriginal water officers

Some water corporations are supporting Aboriginal water officers through direct or indirect means.

Westernport Water employs one Aboriginal Land and Water Officer, and Gippsland Water has recently appointed an Aboriginal Water Officer through its partnership with GLaWAC (refer to case study). South East Water has supported the development of BLCAC's green team and provided support for an Aboriginal water officer application to DELWP. Goulburn Murray Water attempted to recruit an Aboriginal water officer in 2019 and will advertise again for this role in 2020 once its organisational restructure is finalised.

Yarra Valley Water works with the DELWP-funded water officer at Bunurong and Wurundjeri as well as networking with the Aboriginal relationships officer at Melbourne Water to look at ways to collaborate and support water officers across Victoria. This includes working together to establish an Aboriginal water employee network.

Goulburn Murray Water works with Aboriginal water officers throughout Northern Victoria including officers servicing Dhuduroa, Taungurung, Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung on matters relating to access to water, economic opportunities and supporting project proposals. Goulburn Murray Water, together with DELWP, hosted the inaugural Aboriginal Water Officer Network gathering in Tatura.

While Melbourne Water does not fund any Aboriginal water officers directly, it is supporting water officers employed within Registered Aboriginal Parties. Future support for water officers is likely to be aligned to Country Plan objectives, Traditional Owner water policies or through Melbourne Water's project work. Any support for this would be through Traditional Owner representative organisations.

Case Study – Aboriginal Water Officer at Gippsland Water

Gippsland Water and GLaWAC have been working in partnership to identify how we can effectively support recognising Aboriginal cultural values and economic inclusion in water management within our region. Our organisations have committed to work together to deliver shared and mutual opportunities that meet our respective goals. To achieve this we walk together to share strengths, build opportunity and develop a close working relationship.

A key milestone of our Aboriginal Water Program has been the creation of an Aboriginal Water Officer role (fixed term), which provides an opportunity for a Traditional Owner to work within Gippsland Water. Key projects that will be delivered during this time are determining the cultural values of the waterways within our operational region and assessing significant cultural sites on the land we manage. In addition to the project outcomes, both partner agencies have identified that this role will offer a genuine opportunity to create meaningful awareness and understanding of Aboriginal values and how they relate to our operations and staff. It will also help build GLaWAC's understanding of the role and functions of a water corporation and inform future partnership objectives.

Case Study – Cultural Burning at Western Treatment Plant

Melbourne Water is an innovative water industry leader. Involvement with fire has traditionally been to reduce risk to assets and to protect our precious water supply catchments. Embarking on a Cultural Fire Plan is a new and courageous step to use fire in partnership with Traditional Owners for land management. The Cultural Fire Plan involves working with Traditional Owners on their Country to use the right fire at the right time for multiple benefits. Over the next 5 years Melbourne Water proposes to trial cultural fire use at multiple sites and monitor the outcomes.

Melbourne Water had used fire historically for one of two purposes. Using fire to manage land for ecological benefit is well accepted in western science and practiced intermittently by Melbourne Water, particularly to manage grasslands. The aim of this is to give specific species a competitive advantage and also to exclude or control certain species. The other fire use is to reduce risk of wildfire, known as fuel reduction or hazard reduction burning. Melbourne Water has its own fire crews who deliver this type of fire management and also respond to wildfire outbreak, mostly within our closed catchments.

Using cultural fire is not common for Melbourne Water. The use of cultural fire should be led and managed by Traditional Owners. This requires external collaboration and devolving some responsibilities. Having a plan of how to arrange and implement cultural burning is therefore critical.

Melbourne Water is presently pursuing cultural burning with Wadawurrung, the Traditional Owners of Melbourne Water Country west of the Werribee River. At the Western Treatment Plant there are over 400 hectares of grassland managed for biodiversity conservation. Their condition varies from degraded to high quality. Now that grazing has been removed, the main management tools are weed control and burning.

In 2017 Ecology Australia developed an ecological burn plan that covers 386 hectares. It states that to maintain health and keep fire hazard low, the grasslands should be burnt regularly. The burn plan divides the priority sites into 17 burn zones. If they were to be burnt at the recommended frequency it would mean burning an average of five zones each year. Significant resourcing issues have reduced burn frequency, and the last burn was completed in 2013. All of the Western Treatment Plant grasslands are now overdue for burning.

Melbourne Water has approved burn plans with the CFA for zone 6 (north of Ryan's swamp) and zone 14 (T-Section grassland) so these have become the focus for working with Wadawurrung. Past planning has not involved Wadawurrung. Wadawurrung and Wurundjeri attended a site in March 2019 with Melbourne Water staff, a CFA officer and fire mentor Victor Stefensen. It is recommended to undertake cultural burns in winter or cooler months to achieve a cool burn, which would be compatible with most of the sites.



Image above: maps of burn plan sites form the ecological burn plan for WTP, Lake Borrie and T-Section on right, Ryans Swamp centre and overview on left (Source: WTP Ecological Burn Plan).

Wadawurrung and Melbourne Water staff also attended the National Indigenous Fire Workshop hosted by Yorta at Barmah State Forest on the Murray River in June 2019. This included a fire masterclass, building capacity within both organisations to plan and undertake the burn.

Implementing a planned burn program for the Western Treatment Plant is complex, with issues still to be resolved around insurance, safety, risk management, location, timing, resourcing etc. The first burn is intended as a pilot project to work through these issues, with a view to establishing a Partnership Agreement with Wadawurrung in the longer term.

Case Study – Goulburn Valley Water and Community

Goulburn Valley Water is committed to building relationships within the indigenous community in our region. We have Yorta Yorta community in the north and central areas of our region and Taunglerang in the south of our region.

In 2018 Goulburn Valley Water and members of the local indigenous Yorta Yorta community put forward a select number of representatives identified as emerging leaders to form a leadership group. The group was established to explore indigenous cultural values with particular a focus to be paid to the significance of water. The leadership group comprised of four Goulburn Valley Water representatives and three representatives from the indigenous community.

The group met on three occasions, the first day was facilitated by Goulburn Valley Water and held at our Shepparton water treatment plant. This day provided the

indigenous members of the group some insight into the water treatment process.

Yorta Yorta members led the second day. The day commenced with a guided tour of the local Barmah state forest. Particular focus was paid to the cultural significance of environmental flows and the education and identification of aboriginal artefacts found in the forest.

The third and final day saw the group participate in a facilitated discussion. The discussion was aimed at drawing out what the group had hoped to achieve as a result of meeting. A number of projects and actions were established. These projects are now underway at Goulburn Valley Water and have a particular focus on incorporating traditional indigenous language into Goulburn Valley Water assets and sites. Further actions and projects have stemmed from this program.





Action 6.3 Aboriginal access to water for economic development

Where applicable, water corporations are endeavouring to notify Traditional Owners when opportunities to access water entitlement arise.

Barwon Water notifies Traditional Owners when opportunities to access water entitlements arise.

Western Water is constrained in its water resources for urban supply, and as such there have been no recent opportunities for Traditional Owners to access water from Western Water's bulk entitlements.

While some of Central Highlands Water's water supply systems are constrained, where possible Central Highlands Water will work with Traditional Owners to identify opportunities for access to water (refer to case study).

Melbourne Water does not own water entitlements and therefore has no formal system to advise Traditional Owners when a water entitlement arises, but it is increasing Traditional Owner involvement in broader water planning and developing stream flow management plans with Wurundjeri input. Melbourne Water is committed to supporting Traditional Owners to participate in IWM and the refresh of the Flood Strategy.

Yarra Valley Water is also having very broad but engaging conversations with Traditional Owner organisations around water needs and opportunities including water entitlements, licence holdings and unclaimed/unmandated water. Some of this has occurred as a result of the Upper Merri Creek IWM and a large part has occurred through learning about cultural flows assessments. These conversations are ongoing and sometimes daily with Traditional Owner organisations.

Case Study – Opportunistic One-Off Water Transfers for Aboriginal and Environmental Values

Central Highlands Water's recent release of 500ML to the Moorabool River to meet Aboriginal and environmental values is a good example of how collaborative working between parties can achieve real wins for all.

Central Highlands Water worked with Corangamite CMA and the VEWB to provide a release from Lal Lal Reservoir which recognised the need for water for environmental and Traditional Owner values and balanced this with the need for certainty of supply to the Ballarat region. The release was made possible by an innovative offset arrangement involving use of the Victorian Water Grid.

Essential to the success of this project was:

- stakeholders being in touch with their systems and recognising upcoming risks
- good communication between all parties so that early discussion happened
- understanding of water entitlement frameworks, water infrastructure and hydrological conditions and recognising opportunities for one-off transfers that could be made without compromising entitlement frameworks.

The release did not impact on long-term water security to Ballarat, did not impose additional cost on Ballarat communities and was greenhouse gas neutral.

Key outcomes for the Moorabool River were reducing risk of fish deaths through the dry summer as well as recognising Aboriginal values.

Central Highlands Water remains open to providing future releases if the opportunity arises.

Action 6.4 Building jobs and capacity

Water corporations are trialling a number of different ways of providing Traditional Owner access to water and shared benefits. Most of these are exploratory or in early planning stages, while some are currently in progress. Several of the projects listed under Actions 6.1 and 6.3 are also relevant here.

Melbourne Water is initiating innovative partnerships with Traditional Owners to boost participation in waterway management and decision making through regional services and capital delivery teams. This involves including Traditional Owners in planning for projects and encouraging employment on projects agreed to be mutually beneficial. This will result in employment of Traditional Owners as waterway managers. Examples include:

- Wurundjeri Woiwurrung is working with Melbourne Water on several contracts to deliver regional services including water and cultural ecology monitoring, works (revegetation, weed control, Country management) and cultural fire
- Wadawurrung is working with Melbourne Water on an agreement to partner in activity at the Western Treatment Plant and some vital grassland management and Ramsar wetland and bird projects
- Bunurong is investigating flow and cultural value information for Upper Bunyip and Tarago and Bass River systems, and has Melbourne Water support to explore natural resource management (NRM) team foundational programs.

During 2018-19 Wannon Water has commenced and continued to trial different ways of providing Traditional Owner access to water and shared benefits through:

- Killara Kooyong Project – an initiative to support the growth and development of Traditional Owners by producing and selling eels into a commercial market (refer to case study)
- Worn Gundidj Seed Program – an initiative that offers use of Wannon Water owned land to Traditional Owner groups for the growth and development of particular indigenous bush foods.

Yarra Valley Water is working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians around access to water for economic development, recognising that everyone's needs and capacity is very different. For example, Yarra Valley Water is currently working with two Aboriginal businesses to utilise Yarra Valley Water land in a treatment plant buffer zone to grow bush foods which will utilise Class A recycled water that is produced at the treatment plant. Yarra Valley Water has been working with Traditional Owners to trial cultural flows assessments as part of the IWM process, and has also provided additional funding, in partnership with Melbourne Water, to assist the water units in Wurundjeri and Bunurong with their future planning and identifying opportunities for economic enterprise development.

Rethinking Reservoirs is a South Gippsland Water project to potentially re-purpose four reservoirs in Korumburra and Poowong which are no longer needed for water supply purposes. South Gippsland Water is liaising with the Bunurong Land Council to ensure awareness of the project and potential opportunity for a shared approach.

Western Water is exploring opportunities particularly with recycled water supply and potential for release as cultural flows from a number of treatment plants. Western Water has been engaging with Traditional Owners through the Western Irrigation Network project on the potential for recycled water to be provided to Traditional Owners for economic purposes. These discussions are still exploratory in nature.

Goulburn Murray Water has worked with Taungurung to understand access to water for multiple land acquisitions. Goulburn Murray Water has also supported a wide variety of funding proposals supporting initiatives driven by Dja Dja Wurrung, Barapa Barapa, Taungurung and Yorta Yorta. Goulburn Valley Water is supportive in exploring opportunities to roll these projects out on its managed land in order to support the economic growth of its communities.

East Gippsland Water is currently working with GLaWAC to identify projects that will enable the Gunaikurnai to work on country through management of land for reuse. In addition they are in the early stages of exploring the opportunity to grow bush tucker on country and possibly grow trees that have significant cultural heritage value, for example spear and canoe trees. It is important to understand that this may take years to come to fruition as the complexity of dealing with Traditional Owners and elders of different tribes will take a lot of time as they work through how this is best dealt with.

Case Study – Killara Kooyang Project

The Killara Kooyang Water Project is a pilot eel aquaculture project using water from Budj Bim in south-west Victoria. Wannon Water had excess aquaculture equipment and opted to dispose of the assets to GMTOAC. The equipment was donated to pilot a project that holds and grows eels captured in Lake Condah for commercial sale.

The aim of the project is to re-establish traditional eel farming and restore its integral role in Gunditjmara society. The project has the potential to generate a economic return to the Gunditjmara community through the sale of smoked eels and interpretive tours for visitors. The pilot project will create 12 employment opportunities for local Traditional Owner groups and will determine future economic benefits if a permanent facility were to proceed.

Wannon Water and Deakin University have been assisting Gunditjmara with the grant writing, design, planning and construction of this facility. The focus is on developing a feasible business opportunity for the Gunditjmara community in south-west Victoria. The project will enable access to water and commercial eel markets, and the development of a business model that can be transferred to other Victorian Traditional Owner groups and communities for the benefit of other Aboriginal Victorians.

The project received funding under the 'Supporting Aboriginal Access to Water for Economic Development Program'.



Left: Indigenous ranger Rodney Dekker holding a mature eel caught from Lake Condah

Above: Killara Kooyang eel aquaculture facility (photo: Ben Pohlner, Wannon Water)

Action 10.8 Increase Aboriginal inclusion in the water sector

Water corporations are working to develop their knowledge of Aboriginal culture and make sure they are culturally safe and inclusive by using cultural awareness training and other actions detailed in their RAP and/or Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) strategies and plans.

A number of water corporations are also sponsoring Aboriginal people in relevant study and training courses, including scholarships, vocational education and traineeships.

Cultural awareness training

Several water corporations use cultural awareness training to help create a culturally safe workplace by enhancing understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander history and culture. Water corporations are also undertaking other inclusive practices, such as including acknowledgement of Country at meetings and events, participating in Indigenous celebrations and flying the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags.

At City West Water, 20% of employees have undertaken formal cultural training including half day foundational training from Koorie Heritage Trust and 8 Ways of Knowing. There are acknowledgment plaques and flags at all locations, acknowledgment of Country at all internal events including board meeting, and in-house cultural safety training is currently being rolled out.

Barwon Water is working in partnership with an Aboriginal consultancy firm and Traditional Owners to deliver cultural awareness training to all staff. Westernport Water ran cultural awareness training across the entire organisation in 2018 and follow up training in 2019. All Coliban Water staff are required to undertake cultural heritage awareness

training as part of their professional development curriculum. As part of the Harcourt and On-Water projects, staff undertake cultural heritage awareness training and assist in archaeological surveys where possible.

In line with GLaWAC's desire to have a 4 Tier Aboriginal Cultural Awareness Training program, with Tier 1 being delivered in-house by partner organisations, South Gippsland Water has developed a Tier 1 program which includes local and legislative context as well as directives around acknowledgement of country and welcome to country protocols and brief introductory videos from Gunaikurnai and Bunurong. Tiers 2-4 are being developed by GLaWAC, with Tiers 2 and 3 featuring in person, on country training with GLaWAC. 2020 will see this new training program go live at South Gippsland Water. In 2019 two South Gippsland Water employees participated in NAIDOC Week celebrations with both the Gunaikurnai and Bunurong which included attending smoking ceremonies, community days and listening to speeches from local and emerging leaders. South Gippsland Water has also attended one meeting of the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network as a guest.

East Gippsland Water has a commercial arrangement with GLaWAC to provide cultural awareness training in their region that visits sites of cultural significance and provides in-depth knowledge of local Aboriginal history.

Goulburn Murray Water has engaged Academy Sport Health Education (ASHE) to provide cultural awareness training to 322 staff. Almost 50% of Central Highlands Water staff have participated in cultural awareness training or are committed to do so in 2020. This session is facilitated by Wauthaurung peoples.

Over 45% of Gippsland Water's people have now participated in a dedicated cultural awareness program and the provision of cross-cultural learning opportunities and experiences is continuing. Several employees have attended cultural awareness training specifically related to their role. Gippsland Water's annual NAIDOC Week celebrations provide an insight into the culture of the local Gunaikurnai.

Yarra Valley Water staff has been building upon its cultural awareness training in order to build cultural capacity and safety amongst its staff and contractors. They have been working collectively with the other metro

water corporations to create an online cultural awareness platform, utilising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff from each business, for all staff to access. To date over 100 Yarra Valley Water staff have undertaken the cultural awareness training with many of these staff members in direct interaction with the broader Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities through various programs and projects. This includes cultural heritage management planning, community inclusion programs, Survival Day sponsorship, social procurement and potential enterprise development opportunities.

During the 2018-19 year, Wannon Water developed collective knowledge of Aboriginal culture by providing cultural awareness opportunities for 52 employees, providing biannual Indigenous inductions for five new employees through partnering with Glenelg Hopkins CMA (refer to case study), providing 16 educational pieces on national Indigenous awareness campaigns (e.g. National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week) and hosting and participating in eight local Indigenous community activities via the Wata Waetnanda Group to help build relationships with Aboriginal groups, individuals and Elders as well as members of the community.

RAPs and Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) strategies

Westernport Water has a D&I Plan with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander targets. East Gippsland Water's D&I Plan incorporates strategies to foster equity and inclusivity for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through direct employment. Wannon Water's inclusion activities and culturally safe practices are supported by its D&I Management Plan.

South East Water's draft Innovate RAP includes actions that recognise and support First Nations employment opportunities and cultural awareness training.

Under its D&I Strategy, Central Highlands Water is committed to improving opportunities and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Central Highlands region. The Central Highlands Water Safe, Healthy and Inclusive calendar of events recognises days of significance such as Sorry Day and NAIDOC Week.

City West Water has a D&I Strategy, is working on a third RAP and launching a second Aboriginal Inclusion Plan (AIP). Western Water also has a RAP and a D&I Strategy.

Aboriginal vocational education and traineeships

Several water corporations have committed to sponsoring Aboriginal people in their vocational education by providing internal traineeships and/or supporting students to attain formal qualifications.

Gippsland Water is committed to providing training and employment opportunities for local Aboriginal people and currently has two Aboriginal trainees employed through their two-year Aboriginal traineeship program. The program provides paid on-the-job experience for the trainees and support to complete a vocational qualification. East Gippsland Water currently engages three Aboriginal trainees, including supporting through parental leave, and they utilise a range of agencies to provide cultural support. In 2018-19 Barwon Water's traineeship program had eight Aboriginal people, and in 2019-20 there are four Aboriginal people.

Yarra Valley Water hosts an Aboriginal trainee via AFL SportsReady, and is currently working to engage a university cadet. Wannon Water provided two workplace traineeship opportunities for people with an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background, and one of these opportunities included the provision of a Certificate III in Business Administration. Goulburn Valley Water's traineeship program includes a Certificate III in Water Operations (refer to case study).

Melbourne Water currently has three Aboriginal people in the traineeship program undertaking Certificate III Conservation Land Management. Melbourne Water supports Traditional Owners to complete a minimum Certificate III Conservation Land Management as part of employment on land management teams (Wurundjeri Narrap, Bunurong in training, Wadawurrung in development). Melbourne Water has also co-designed a waterway management specific multi-day certified training course for Aboriginal Victorians to

increase knowledge of and participation in waterway management and decision making. The pilot of this course will be launched in March-May 2020.

Coliban Water hosts two local Aboriginal students from Bendigo Senior Secondary College as part of the Wanyarram Dhelk School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships program. This program commenced in July 2019 with the students undertaking an 18 month placement with Coliban Water while completing a Certificate III in Business Administration.

Westernport Water is currently recruiting for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander trainee, having successfully launched its trainee-

ship program in 2017 (refer to case study). Lower Murray Water will be commencing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeship program in 2020 (currently identifying appropriate traineeship positions through an organisational review process).

South East Water's first First Nations summer internship commenced in November 2019. Cultural safety in the workplace was delivered to the team that the intern was placed in.

Central Highlands Water's trainee program focuses on the employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth. The focus of the program is on opportunities for on-going employment and skills building.

Case Study – Learning Together

Westernport Water recognises the importance of creating career paths for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the water industry. In 2017, Westernport Water created its first Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander traineeship to build capability and better reflect the diversity of the community we serve.

Sam Weston commenced his traineeship with Westernport Water in 2017 and has been an integral part of the Environment and Product Performance Team. Sam completed his qualification in Conservation and Land Management in 2018 and while working Sam has progressed towards completion of his university degree in Fisheries and Aquaculture. Since completing his studies in 2018 and finishing his traineeship, Sam has been promoted to the position of Land and Water Officer with Westernport Water.

"Westernport Water has provided me with great mentors in the water industry that have allowed me to succeed in both my studies and my work. In my new role, I hope to contribute to the ongoing success of our organisation. My passion lies with our ability to be able to manage our land and water resources in a sustainable manner, much like the Bunurong Peoples of the Bass Coast have done for many, many generations."

"I feel privileged to be able to come into work every day, knowing that I'm caring for country like my ancestors would have done before me. I look forward to the challenge of how we manage our resources in the future, focusing on sustainability through wastewater reuse and reducing our carbon footprint to combat climate change."



Sam Weston, Westernport Water

"I'm delighted to continue with the great work we are doing on our reconciliation journey as we work towards unity within our community. Working alongside our passionate reconciliation friends and creating ways of incorporating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island cultural values in how we operate. I acknowledge that the Traditional Custodians here have cultural, spiritual and economic connections to land and water resources and that these connections are vital for their individual and community health and wellbeing."

"For me, Nation Dance was a moment to acknowledge my spiritual connection to country and my ancestors. A moment to heal my mind and spirit. A moment to gain strength, pride and confidence and a moment to wish water for my country back home. The rains came in shortly after we danced here on Millowl and it felt surreal!"

Case Study – Indigenous Inductions

Recognising the indigenous knowledge within the Glenelg Hopkins CMA and under a Partnership Statement between Wannon Water and the CMA, Wannon Water requested to join the Glenelg Hopkins CMA Indigenous Inductions that are conducted twice a year.

This request allows staff within the local water authorities to receive consistent information and knowledge from experienced colleagues who work closely with Traditional Owners at the commencement of their employment. The joint training allows for collaboration and networking between new employees of both authorities.

Case Study – From Trainee To Employee

During 2016 to 2018 Goulburn Valley Water initiated several traineeships in our water operations area inviting members of the indigenous community to get involved and apply for these roles.

We had established traineeships where we recognised pending retirements over the next 18-24 months and established a program including undertaking a Certificate III in Water Operations as part of the traineeship.

Our recruitment process involved several interviews and included members of the local indigenous community to be part of the interview panel along with members of Goulburn Valley Water. We recruited two trainees and found we had other applications from several people already in the workforce. This included Gavin Morgan who applied for an ongoing role as a water operator with Goulburn Valley Water and is now in his third year with us. He loves working for Goulburn Valley Water.

One of our trainees Jordan Power became an ongoing employee in February 2019 in our Central Operations and Maintenance Team and he is doing a wonderful job and enjoying the experience. Another of our trainees completed his program and has gone to work with another employer in our region but had learnt several workplace skills and knowledge with Goulburn Valley Water.

Gavin and Jordan both led an indigenous flag raising ceremony for Goulburn Valley Water in 2019 during Naidoc week. These proud indigenous men continue to teach us a lot about their culture. We love having them in our organisation.

Our trainee program will continue in 2020 with another opportunity identified in our Northern Team.



Action 10.9 Support economic development through Aboriginal participation

Water corporations are pursuing social procurement strategies and leveraging their relationships with Traditional Owner groups to explore and develop opportunities for business arrangements with Traditional Owners and Aboriginal enterprises. Aboriginal participation in the water sector is also being encouraged through opportunities for cross-cultural learning, as well as skills training and employment for Aboriginal Victorians.

Aboriginal business opportunities

Several water corporations engage Traditional Owner organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses to provide a range of goods and services, in relation to water and land management as well as for other corporate requirements.

A total of 13 Traditional Owner businesses are supported by Melbourne Water to the value of \$561,894, of which \$253,647 worth are Supply Nation listed. The Wurundjeri Woiwurrung Narrap team has been discussing opportunities for regular contract work in 2019-20 in landscaping, water and fire management. Melbourne Water is also supporting more than 20 local projects with Traditional Owners through two avenues:

- identifying suppliers to deliver services and goods – this may also include engagement and employment through projects and services that Melbourne Water delivers
- providing support directly to Traditional Owners to self-determine their priorities in waterway management and more broadly in water – this engagement has led to employment or further involvement in some projects.

During 2018-19, Yarra Valley Water has had a total expenditure of \$426,456.77 across 12 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses. Some of this expenditure related to water and catchment services or the provision of services that support catchment and water infrastructure planning. Yarra Valley Water continues to work with Traditional Owner organisations in IWM planning and outside of this in future water planning and management. There is limited opportunity to engage Traditional Owners and Aboriginal enterprises beyond this due to the limited number of businesses that deliver catchment and water services.

Coliban Water engage Djandak (the commercial arm of the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation) in relation to natural resource management across the region. Central Highlands Water is also partnering with Djandak as one of its land maintenance contractors. This provides employment and capacity building opportunities for Traditional Owners. Further opportunities for relationship, capability and capacity building are provided by ensuring Wathaurung/Dja Dja Wurrung participation in key regional projects through the IWN plan.

Goulburn Murray Water also engages Djandak and Wokka Wolla (Yorta Yorta) for natural resource management, as well as services in revegetation, fencing, pest plant management and cultural heritage work. Goulburn Murray Water has signed onto Supply Nation to identify other Aboriginal businesses within the region.

In addition to the Traditional Owners being engaged to undertake cultural and heritage assessment for on-ground works, Western Water has engaged four Aboriginal businesses to provide services. These services include production of artwork, graphic design, mental health awareness training and land management. Western Water also utilised cultural training (of board, executive and RAP working group) and Welcome to Country (for Sunbury's Water Future Community Panel) services provided by Traditional Owners. Under its RAP, Western Water invites Traditional Owner groups to participate in corporate training activities.

Barwon Water has explored and realised a range of business opportunities through its Partnership Agreements with Traditional Owner groups and with Aboriginal owned businesses including printing, stationery, design works, cultural heritage consultants, facilitators and artists.

Social procurement

In line with Victorian Government's social procurement objectives, water corporations' social procurement strategies include the provision of opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians.

City West Water has recently developed a Social Procurement Policy which ensures it will support First Nations businesses, and is currently utilising six First Nation businesses. A Gold Corporate partnership with Kinaway Chamber of Commerce is currently being set up.

East Gippsland Water and Gippsland Water and other GEA partners are working with GLaWAC on developing their skills to enable them to competitively bid for commercial projects such as grounds maintenance, in alignment with social procurement guidelines.

Westernport Water's draft social procurement strategy has been prepared incorporating objectives to build capacity through purchasing and policy updates. Within North East Water's draft social procurement strategy a key social procurement objective focuses on opportunities for Victorian Aboriginal people through purchasing from Victorian Aboriginal businesses. Both of these draft strategies are currently with DTF for consultation. A social procurement strategy is also under development at South Gippsland Water which will include goals relating to procurement from Aboriginal businesses.

During this year Central Highlands Water has reviewed its procurement practices and has included social procurement as a central premise. This will reinforce many existing practices where procurement supports local social enterprises, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations.

A number of social requirements are being developed to support the tender awarding process at Wannon Water, guided by its Social Procurement Framework which is supported by Victoria's Social Procurement Framework.

Melbourne Water is advancing social procurement through its RAP by supporting Aboriginal businesses which employ Aboriginal people. South East Water has a draft procurement RAP target of \$500,000 per annum. Yarra Valley Water has a 3% procurement target in its Stretch RAP.

Cross-cultural learning

During 2018-19, Melbourne Water delivered 13 cross-cultural learning activities totalling 40 hours, with 300 participants (refer to case study). At Wannon Water, 53 cross-cultural learning opportunities were provided through webinars, on country tours and presentations on local Indigenous projects.

Westernport Water is supporting its Land and Water Officer to identify partnership opportunities with other water corporations and partners delivering training to Aboriginal people in water management, and to undertake a work arrangement with Wurundjeri Land Council's Land Management Team to learn skills from Traditional Owners and assist with their works program, as well as incorporate learnings into Westernport Water's land management activities.

Aboriginal employment

The Water Industry Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2019-2023 includes a 3% collective industry target for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment. The 2019 annual performance report shows the current average figure for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employees across all water corporations is 1.6%.

The four metro water corporations (City West Water, Melbourne Water, South East Water and Yarra Valley Water) jointly employ a First Nations Advisor to review and improve how they recruit and retain Aboriginal employees, how they build culturally safe workplaces, and how they engage with the First Nations community on different projects.

Goulburn Murray Water has signed an MOU with multiple agencies including Goulburn Broken CMA, Parks Victoria and DELWP to form a Jobs for Aboriginal People Alliance to work collaboratively to realise job opportunities in Northern Victoria. This will involve training and mentoring community on employment opportunities within the water sector. Goulburn Murray Water has extended an invitation to Registered Aboriginal Parties to participate in training opportunities.

Barwon Water employs an Aboriginal Partnerships Advisor to assist in developing their relationships with Traditional Owners and delivering their RAP, and to ensure they are creating a culturally safe and inclusive workplace. The Aboriginal Partnerships Advisory is a participant in Barwon Water's comprehensive leadership program.

North East Water is currently partnering with North East CMA to employ a shared resource Aboriginal Project Officer. This position will work on key projects that involve improving relationships with Aboriginal communities and information sharing that will lead to increased participation in the projects.

City West Water employs a Senior Project Manager, First Nations Values for Water and has made changes to their standard recruitment practices to ensure First Nations interest and participation in the water industry.

Yarra Valley Water has built into its Stretch RAP the target of reaching 3% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employment by the completion of the RAP. Currently it has five Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander staff. Earlier in the 2018-19 financial year, Yarra Valley Water contracted a Wurndjeri workplace health and safety officer for a period of six months to assist in development capacity around workplace health and safety. This also provided for internal capacity building for Yarra Valley Water.

Two City West Water employees currently identify as First Nations. Wannon Water employs two people that identify as being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. Western Water has four employees who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. South East Water currently has one Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander employee. Melbourne Water currently employs 13 people identified as either Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and it has an organisational target of 30. Cultural safety is a high priority, as well as providing these staff with adequate HR support.

Wannon Water has committed \$15,000 funding to support the appointment of a female Aboriginal as Deputy Chair of the Great South Coast IWM Forum and drafted a proposal for the role in consultation with DELWP. GMTOAC and EMAC were approached to put forward a candidate for the role. Wannon Water also offers at least one annual sponsored position in the Leadership Great South Coast program to assist in the development of anyone from a diverse background (including Indigenous applicants).

Yarra Valley Water has two Aboriginal Board members, and Barwon Water, Goulburn Valley Water and Westernport Water each have one Aboriginal Board member.

Case Study – Yaluk Biik Baan

Celebrating 2019 International Year of Indigenous Languages, Melbourne Water hosted Yaluk Biik Baan, an event week designed to increase knowledge and awareness of Aboriginal culture. With two bus tours, a language forum, and an art exhibition, there were plenty of activities across multiple sites to encourage participation.

Bunurong cultural tour

Launching the week on 6 August, the Bunurong Cultural Tour began with a smoking ceremony and visited Tooradin, Mount Martha, and the Eastern Treatment Plant. Participants heard the Story of Bunyip, and learnt about scar trees and Bunurong coastal living from Dan Turnbull, Bunurong Land Council (pictured with staff at Devilbend Reservoir). Many participants commented that they appreciated the opportunity to learn directly from a Bunurong Elder, and were grateful for the occasion to build a relationship.



Wurundjeri Woiwurrung cultural tour

Braving the weather on 9 August, the Wurundjeri Maribyrnong Catchment Tour began at Horseshoe Bend Farm with a smoking ceremony and tour of the area from Uncle Bill Nicholson. Uncle Bill explained how the area would have been set up by Wurundjeri people, with huts built for men, women, and couples, and how they would have used the Maribyrnong River as a food source. Participants were then taken on a site tour of Wilimee mooring (Mount William), but were forced to finish early to escape bitterly cold weather.



Aboriginal language forum

We were joined by Prof Len Collard, Mandy Nicholson, and Gheran Steele for the Language Forum on August 9, who each spoke language and discussed the importance of language to them and their culture. Mandy, a Wurundjeri-willam, has a degree in Aboriginal Archaeology and shared particular words and syllables

from the Woiwurrung language, while Gheran discussed the vast and varying nature of each Aboriginal group and language, emphasising that Aboriginal culture should not be thought of as homogenous.



Art exhibition

This was the showpiece event of Yaluk Biik Baan, featuring artworks from Traditional Owner artists and participants from The Torch, an organisation that supports Indigenous offenders and ex-offenders through its Indigenous Arts in Prison and Community Program. Volunteers sold eleven paintings from the exhibition, raising over \$3,000 for the Peter Cullen Trust Indigenous Scholarship, which funds Aboriginal people to participate in a Trust program for water and environment managers. Proceeds also went to artists from The Torch, aiding in the opportunity to define new pathways for themselves upon release from prison. We had a high volume of Melbourne Water staff and external visitors exploring the exhibition, with one visitor appreciating the “epic” display of work and chance to see art from Aboriginal artists on public display.



Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework

Measure 18.1.7 of the VAAF is the number of formal partnership agreements for planning and management between Aboriginal communities and key water and catchment management agencies.

A number of water corporations have formal Partnership Agreements in place:

- Barwon Water and Wadawurrung Traditional Owners. Barwon Water is currently developing similar agreements with other Traditional Owner groups.
- East Gippsland Water, Gippsland Water, South Gippsland Water and Southern Rural Water are signatories to the GLaWAC and GEA Partnership Agreement (refer to case study).
- Melbourne Water and Wurundjeri (for Upper Merri Creek cultural flows).
- Wannon Water and Framlingham Community (in relation to improving water quality) (refer to case study).

In addition, a number of water corporations have entered into other agreements with Traditional Owner groups:

- South East Water and Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation (BLCAC) (annual consultation fee arrangement).
- Westernport Water is part of the Bass Coast Reconciliation Network (with key partners Phillip Island Nature Parks, Bass Coast Shire Council and Bass Coast Health). Outcomes include joint events to support and celebrate dates of significance, marketing and promotion to raise awareness, development of a Welcome to Country video and investigations into shared employment opportunities.
- Yarra Valley Water has been developing a formalised partnership between itself and Wurundjeri.
- Goulburn Murray Water has state-driven agreements in place such as the Yorta Yorta Cooperative Management (2004), and also works within the parameters of various Recognition Settlement Agreements and associated Land Use Activity Agreements (Taungurung and Dja Dja Wurrung). As a result of the Connections Project, Goulburn Murray Water established a Yorta Yorta Nation – Goulburn Murray Water General Area Agreement (2014) and revised agreement (2018).

Case Study – Gunaikurnai Land And Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLaWAC) And Gippsland Environmental Agencies (GEA)

Four water corporations in the Gippsland region (East Gippsland Water, Gippsland Water, South Gippsland Water and Southern Rural Water) are signatories to the GLaWAC and GEA Partnership Agreement to deliver meaningful outcomes for local Aboriginal communities.

The Agreement has four key objectives and a two-year action plan. The objectives are:

- Respecting Gunaikurnai as Traditional Owners and fostering mutual respect
- Supporting economic development opportunities
- Supporting joint management arrangements within the ten parks and reserves
- Support a workforce strategy for Aboriginal people in Gippsland

The partnership recognises the vital importance of healthy land and waterways in the traditional culture of the Gunaikurnai and forms the framework for land and water initiatives in the region.

The multi-agency approach recognises that Traditional Owners groups are often stretched by the increasing interest in engagement from agencies across many sectors, and don't have the resources or time to negotiate separate agreements with individual agencies. This is the strength of the multi-agency model: it allows the Traditional Owners to lead the joint process with all partners, and for the collective group to share, learn and more quickly implement the agreed objectives with partner collaborations.

The Managing Directors/CEOs of all organisations in the partnership have joint governance oversight of the delivery of the annual action plan. The action plan works with Gunaikurnai people to support implementation of: economic development opportunities, ongoing development of works programs, a workforce and recruitment strategy, support the Joint Management of Parks, and development of a multi-level cultural

awareness program which is now being rolled out across 13 organisations. At its most recent meeting, the action plan was extended to include initial planning for how the group could support GLaWAC's work in bushfire recovery across East Gippsland, where there has been significant cultural losses.

The partners also jointly celebrate key dates, such as Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week, and have developed protocols for sharing communications.

A working group meets bi-monthly to implement the annual action plan and meet the objectives of the Agreement. Key achievements of the working group in the past year have been:

- Establishing and delivering a three stage cultural awareness training program for all partners.
- Developing practical plans in consultation with GLaWAC to achieve partner agency Aboriginal employment targets.
- Reviewing tender documentation to promote the inclusion and training of Gunaikurnai people.

Case Study – Improving Water Quality in the Framlingham Community

Wannon Water received \$1.4million from Aboriginal Victoria to improve water quality in the Framlingham Community. The funds received will be used to collaborate with community and community administrators to build the required infrastructure, establish operational practices and educate community members on the delivery of better quality water to the Framlingham Community.

Wannon Water is a stakeholder on the Framlingham Community Safety Working Group (Infrastructure) through which this project initiative began. This investment will deliver increased health benefits through consistent water quality and security of supply and continue to build capacity through engagement and education within the Framlingham Community. The project scope considers the required standard infrastructure but also considers the specific needs of Indigenous communities and is committed for completion within the 2019-20 period.

Conclusion

Victorian water corporations are working to fulfil the actions and goals outlined in Water for Victoria and the VAAF with respect to recognising Aboriginal values and supporting greater Aboriginal participation in the sector.

Local context is key. The way in which water corporations engage with Traditional Owners and the projects that they are able to initiate and/or support varies greatly depending on their geographical location, the type and extent of land and waterways under their management, the number and capacity of Traditional Owner groups within their service area, and importantly, the needs and aspirations of the local Aboriginal communities.

Water corporations are making efforts to deepen their cultural awareness and build strong and meaningful relationships with Traditional Owner groups, so that the shared benefits of access, participation and inclusion can be realised for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians.





VicWater
BETTER TOGETHER

L2, 466 Little Lonsdale St Melbourne 3000
03 9639 8868 | vicwater.org.au