



Wadawurrung
Traditional Owners
Aboriginal Corporation



Collaboration *Djilang*

Leaders for Geelong 2020–21

Cover Image:
Billy-Jay O'Toole

Painting

Title: 'Collaboration Djilang'

Story of artwork:

The artwork depicts the elements of Wadawurrung Country in which the Committee for Geelong resides. To prosper we must all come together to empower, educate, listen, and create mentoring opportunities to grow leaders amongst us, to have connectedness together for change, growth, outcomes, and achievements. Collaborating as businesses, people, and organisations, and supporting the empowerment of the region and all people on Wadawurrung Country.

Sketchings: 'Wadawurrung Country'

Artist Profile

Billy-Jay O'Toole

BJ O'Toole is a local Wadawurrung artist who aims to educate people about his Culture and love for Country through his art. BJ grew up in Geelong on Wadawurrung Country, an area that stretches south of the Great Dividing Range, west from the Werribee River and along the Surf Coast.

BJ has a Certificate IV in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and works as a Field Officer with the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation in managing and protecting cultural heritage. He enjoys creating commissioned works in different forms, sizes and media using acrylic colours.

BJ is a father of two children and one day hopes to be a full-time artist. To know more about his art and designs please log into his Facebook page: [Papul Art](#).





Wadawurrung
Traditional Owners
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Collaboration **Djilang** Project Team

Susan Ang, Deakin University

Andrew Block, Geelong Football Club

Sally Hutchinson, CSIRO

Danielle Moore, Barwon Health

Beth Rider, WorkSafe Victoria

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Acknowledgement of Country

The Collaboration Djilang Project Team acknowledges the Wadawurrung People as the Traditional Owners of the land on which we work. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Nations People.

Foreword

The Leaders for Geelong program is an excellent initiative and one that delivers tremendous value for Geelong/Djilang. Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation is delighted to have worked together with the 'Collaboration Djilang' project team and have been thoroughly impressed by the team's energy and enthusiasm. I am confident that their work will help deliver many long-term benefits for the region.



Paul Davis

CEO, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation & Project Sponsor



Collaboration **Djilang** Project Team



Susan Ang

Associate Head of School (International) and Senior Lecturer in Architecture, School of Architecture and Built Environment, Faculty of Science, Deakin University

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Susan was born in Malaysia and came to Djilang as an international student to study architecture at Deakin University. After 15 years as an architect, Susan pursued an academic career to champion education and practice to widen community participation through inclusive design and social consciousness in the built environment.



Andrew Block

Financial Planning & Analysis Manager, Geelong Football Club

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Andrew grew up on a farm in the small town of Toolamba in country Victoria on Yorta Yorta country. Andrew moved to Djilang for University, but stayed for the lifestyle and now combines his passion for finance, strategy & sport as a full-time job.



Dr Sally Hutchinson, MRACI

Senior Research Scientist, CSIRO Manufacturing

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Sally was born on the lands of the Guldijan people and has called Djilang home since she was 10 years old. As a senior research scientist at CSIRO, Sally works in diverse science areas such as carbon fibre and advanced recycling of plastics.



Danielle Moore

Radiology Systems Supervisor - Barwon Health

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Danielle has lived in Djilang her entire life, working as a radiographer at Barwon Health for the last 20 years. She leads the Radiology Systems Administration team and manages many clinical informatics systems throughout Barwon Health and the region. Danielle is passionate about enhancing clinical workflows to improve outcomes for all.



Beth Rider

Manager, WorkSafe Victoria

worksafe.vic.gov.au

Beth was born and raised in Canberra, Ngunnawal Country. She moved to Djilang in 2019 shifting her career specialising in sports marketing, governance and commercialisation into reducing workplace harm for Victorians and improving outcomes for injured workers.

Executive Summary

This project was completed for the 2020–21 Leaders for Geelong program to advance an ongoing partnership between the Committee for Geelong and the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC). The aim was for a group of Leaders for Geelong participants to work together and create a positive impact for the community.

Under the sponsorship of Paul Davis, CEO of the WTOAC, the Collaboration Djilang project objectives were to demonstrate tangible business/organisation benefits and identify gaps that may exist in organisations engaging with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.

The project scope identified an opportunity to uncover the business benefits from engaging with the WTOAC and build on the momentum of previous project groups in shifting mindsets of Djilang organisations from perceiving engagement with the WTOAC as an obligation or compliance into an opportunity for mutual benefit and growth.

Our team conducted a series of meetings, brainstorming, and consultation activities, before delivering two concurrent project streams. One was facilitating focus groups with organisations that already engaged with the WTOAC, and the other was engaging with a prominent Djilang organisation, Avalon Airport, as a case study.

The focus groups sought to identify key learnings about the nature of engagement with WTOAC, the actual and perceived business benefits; and the challenges and learnings from these partnerships. The learnings identified what successes looked like so far, and further understandings of prevalent challenges.

The outcomes of our investigation indicated a high desire for currently engaged organisations to strengthen, expand, and deepen relationships. These organisations voiced strong motivation to connect respectfully with the history and Culture of the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners and Country.

The benefits that were consistently perceived and experienced by Avalon Airport and organisations that participated in the focus groups were associated with cultural and social responsibility, inclusion, and respect for Wadawurrung Culture, heritage and Cultural knowledge.

It became clear through the focus groups and the case study with Avalon Airport, that organisations:

- are keen to affect organisational change throughout their organisational hierarchies
- are open to long-term partnerships
- desire meaningful engagement
- don't perceive financial benefit as a driver to enter a partnership with the WTOAC.

The project further identified key factors surrounding gaps that existed including:

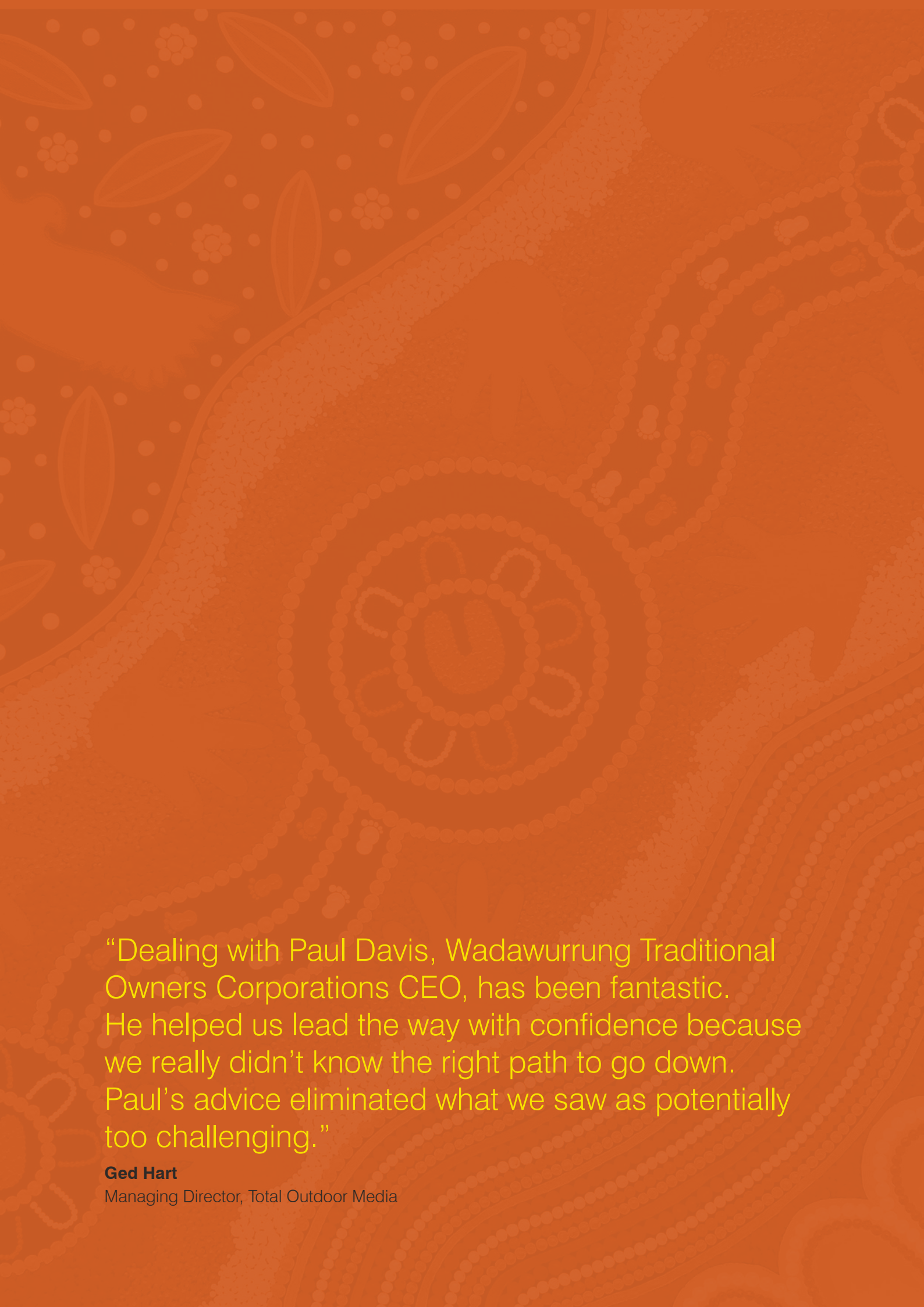
- a gap in cultural knowledge in the organisations
- fear of doing or saying the wrong thing
- a limited number of active WTOAC members to remove the single person dependencies.

Following the analysis of all the learnings gained through this project, we have put forward 12 recommendations for a framework to be developed as a practical toolkit to be taken up by WTOAC. Our hope is that it will facilitate future pathways for organisations to enter mutually beneficial partnerships with WTOAC.

The primary outcome of this project was to establish a consistently strong appetite to engage with the WTOAC from all organisations small, medium and large from across various industries. The qualitative research and the case study have uncovered a deep respect for the Traditional Owners and Wadawurrung Country. The project has uncovered clear benefits to businesses from the engagement, and has identified opportunities for the WTOAC to increase the number of long-term partnerships the WTOAC has with local organisations.

With only a small percentage of active Wadawurrung Traditional Owners currently available to deliver activities for the WTOAC, a key recommendation in this report is a call to action for organisations to offer support to the WTOAC and to assist in the recruitment of more members.

This project acknowledges the limitations where the perspectives gained are from the point of views of only the representatives of the organisations that participated in the focus groups.



“Dealing with Paul Davis, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Corporations CEO, has been fantastic. He helped us lead the way with confidence because we really didn’t know the right path to go down. Paul’s advice eliminated what we saw as potentially too challenging.”

Ged Hart

Managing Director, Total Outdoor Media

Acknowledgements

The Collaboration Djilang Project Team would like to sincerely thank the following organisations and individuals for their time and contribution to the project:

- All participants who gave up their time to participate in the focus groups (Appendix 1, p33)
- **Paul Davis** — CEO WTOAC and Project Sponsor
- **Andrew Elliott** — Operations Manager, Avalon Airport, and Leaders for Geelong 2020–21 Colleague
- **Janet Walter** — Leadership Portfolio Manager, Committee for Geelong
- **Daniel Clair** — Leaders for Geelong Alumni 2013–14 and mentor to the project team
- **Jennifer Cromarty** — CEO, Committee for Geelong
- **Holly Earl** — Corporate Affairs Manager, Committee for Geelong
- **Nikki Gilbertson (Gen U)** — Promoting Djilang, Leaders for Geelong project team 2019–20
- **Margaret Foulkes** — 2020 Leadership Portfolio Manager, Committee for Geelong

The team would also like to thank our organisations for supporting this leadership opportunity, Deakin University, Geelong Football Club, CSIRO, Barwon Health and WorkSafe Victoria.

Key Terms of Reference, Language and Acronyms

Acknowledgement of Country

An Acknowledgement of Country is an opportunity for everyone to show respect for Traditional Owners and the continuing connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. It can be given by both non-First Nations People and First Nations people.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people

'Aboriginal' refers to the descendants of the first inhabitants of the mainland of Australia, including Tasmania and other islands. 'Torres Strait Islander' refers to people from the outlying 274 islands located within the Torres Strait.

Committee for Geelong

A not-for-profit organisation that provide strategic leadership and influence to help advocate for a better future for Geelong. The Committee for Geelong facilitates the Leaders for Geelong program each year, fostering future leaders for the region.

Country

For First Nations people, "Country" does not just mean the creeks, rock outcrops, hills and waterholes. Country includes all living things. It incorporates people, plants and animals. It embraces the seasons, stories and creation spirits. "Country" is both a place of belonging and a way of believing.

Djilang

Historical name for the Geelong region as identified by the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners. Means 'tongue' to describe the shape of the land peninsula and was adapted by European colonists that came to the area now called 'Geelong'.

First Nations

Reference to people who were original inhabitants, prior to colonisation. A term that is growing in acceptance, however, is still perceived as a very generic way without adequately describing the Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia.

Indigenous

Some First Nations People have expressed that they may not favour the term Indigenous, although it is widely used to collectively describe Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People. As this may be read by a wide range of people, the report has avoided the use of this word unless it is referenced within another document and it is not appropriate to use an alternative word.

Reconciliation Action Plan

A Reconciliation Action Plan is a strategic document that provides a framework for organisation, or education providers to support the national reconciliation movement. There are four levels of Reconciliation Action Plan – Reflect, Innovate, Stretch or Elevate. They include practical actions that can drive the organisation's actions towards reconciliation within the organisation and in the communities in which it operates.

Registered Aboriginal Party

An organisation representing a Traditional Owner group legally recognised under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Victoria) with responsibilities for managing and protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage and to represent the interests of those recognised Traditional Owners. Within the Geelong region, Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation is the Registered Aboriginal Party.

Traditional Owners

Are the descendants from the First Nations people who have ongoing cultural connections to Country and with spiritual responsibility for the site, land, and have traditional rights over land, waters, sea and sky.

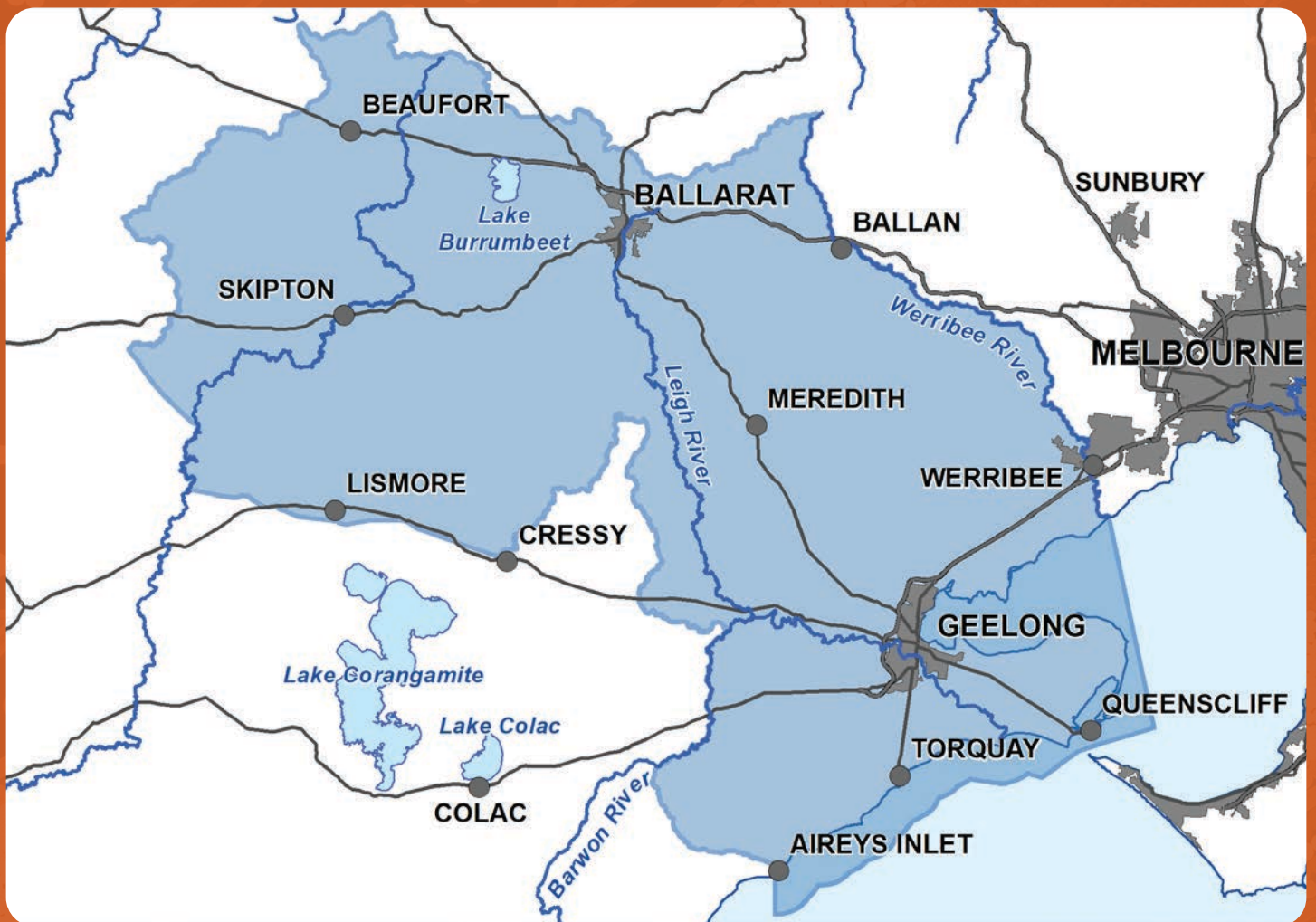
Welcome to Country

A Welcome to Country occurs at the beginning of a formal event and can take many forms including singing, dancing, smoking ceremonies or a speech in traditional language or English. A culturally appropriate Welcome to Country is only to be delivered by the Traditional Owners of that particular area of Country on which the Welcome is being performed.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC)

A Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) which represents Wadawurrung Traditional Owner interests and has a statutory role in managing the Aboriginal heritage, Culture and values across Wadawurrung Country.

Wadawurrung Country



“Being located on the border of Wadawurrung or Bunurong country in Werribee makes it important to do the research to determine who is the right group to contact.”

Cheryl Taylor

Research Scientist, CSIRO Agriculture & Food

Context and Background

In March 2021, the Leaders for Geelong Project Team Collaboration Djilang came together as a team comprising five members representing Deakin University, Geelong Football Club, CSIRO Manufacturing, Barwon Health and WorkSafe Victoria.

The Collaboration Djilang project represents the third year of a successful partnership between the Committee for Geelong and WTOAC.

Initially a pre-scoped project rationale and proposed outcome was submitted to the newly formed project group, Collaborating Djilang, on behalf of the WTOAC and the Committee for Geelong. The original project rationale and proposed outcomes are as follows.

The project rationale

“Many organisations that do business on Wadawurrung Country are not aware of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners. This project would highlight recognition of Wadawurrung culture in various ways with local organisations, in an effort to develop recognition across the region and hopefully pave the way for other businesses and organisations to do so. The idea of this project came about from the 2019–20 Leaders for Geelong ‘Promoting Djilang’ Project Group who connected WTOAC with a local sock manufacturing company, which resulted in Indigenous artwork featuring on the socks.”

The proposed outcome

“The goal with this project is to try and demonstrate tangible business/organisation benefits by working collaboratively with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners as well as identifying any gaps that may exist in businesses/organisations engaging with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners. Engagement with a minimum of three businesses and coming up with a product, activity or service they can include within their business/organisation that is done in consultation with Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.”

The Collaboration Djilang project group used the above project rationale and proposed outcome together with collective project research background and knowledge informed and guided by the excellent research and recommendations that came from 2019–20 Promoting Djilang’s project undertakings, in particular the results of the survey conducted with local organisations to understand the current engagement between them and the WTOAC.

To this end, this provided an excellent position for the Collaboration Djilang project scope to focus on broadening and deepening these understandings and to take steps to advance exemplary partnership goals for business benefits with key organisations in Djilang.

This project scope is explored further in the Project Purpose and Objectives on page 17.



About the **Wadawurrung** Traditional Owners and the WTOAC

Victoria has a particularly brutal history in its treatment of First Nations people. In Djilang before white settlement, it is thought that there were at least 7,000 Wadawurrung People living on their Country. William Buckley, an escaped convict, lived with the Wadawurrung People for 32 years and reported seeing large gatherings for special occasions. In 1837 the Geelong police ordered William Buckley to round up all of the Wadawurrung People in the region; it was reported there were only 297. In 1842, 5 years later another count identified only 118 Wadawurrung People. By 1853, it was reported that only 17 remained and by 1868 there were only 2. Many had perished from the diseases that white people brought with them, others were murdered, and some moved on to other areas as the land was divided up for settlers and fenced off.

Today's Wadawurrung People are the descendants of one apical ancestor, John Robinson (Robertson) 1846–1919, born Terrinallum Station, died Warrnambool.

Wadawurrung People are the Traditional Owners of vast lands including Djilang, and the WTOAC is their representative body. The WTOAC works to support their aspirations and protect their Cultural Heritage in accordance with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. The WTOAC provides a host of education and other services across the region including ceremonial duties, Welcome to Countries, Smoking Ceremonies and cultural heritage assessments.

The WTOAC's Let's Make Country Good Together 2020–30 strategy identifies nine values which are flagged as 'the important things to look after', the building blocks. It also identifies 16 threats to those values. One of the threats is lack of recognition.

The **Wadawurrung** Traditional Owners primary logo has deep meaning

The symbolism represented in the logo is present in image, shape, colour and structure. It is essential that the significance and meaning embodied in the logo is observed and preserved in all design applications. In doing so, we demonstrate respect for the Elders who made it.

The colour Black represents the people.

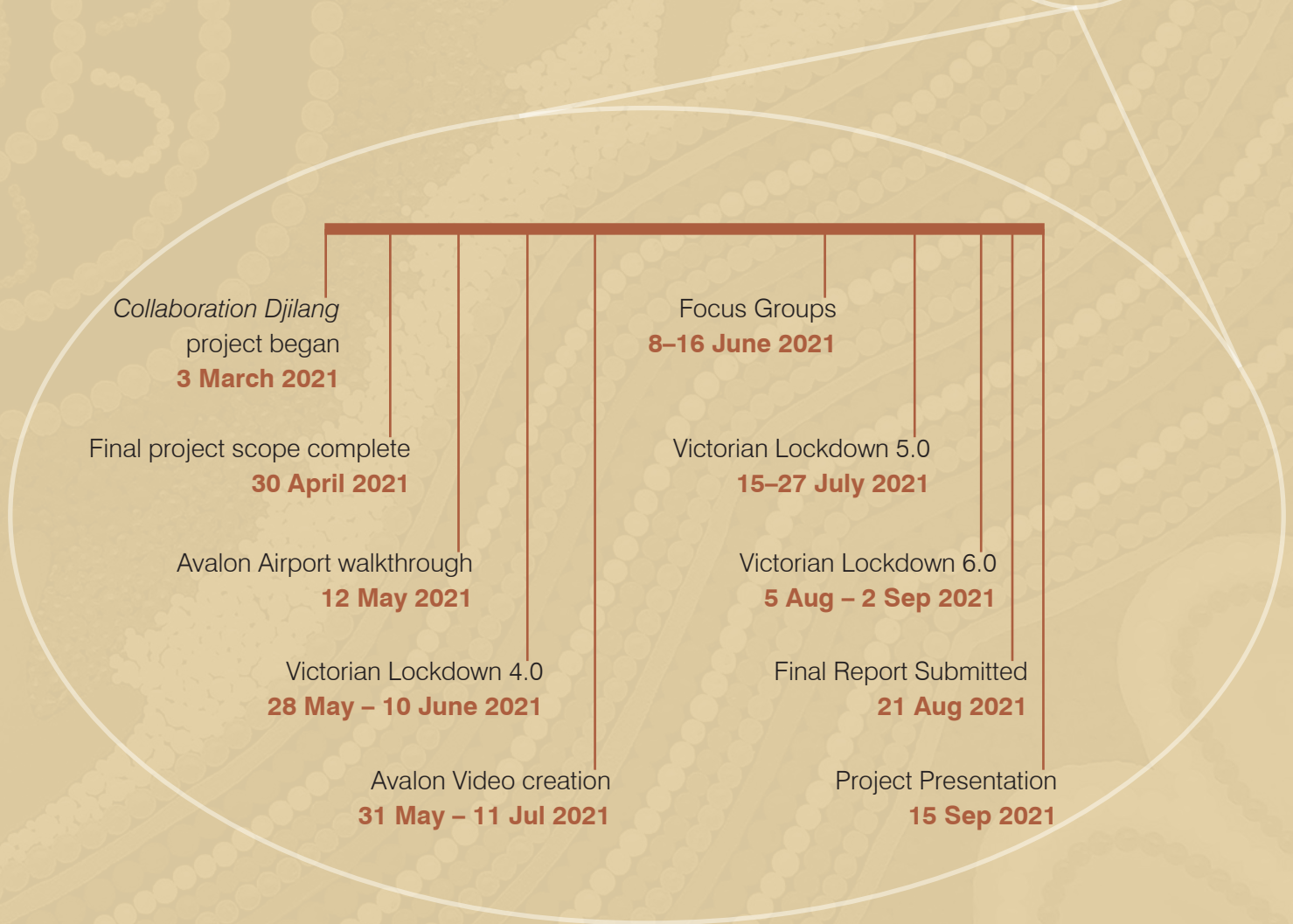
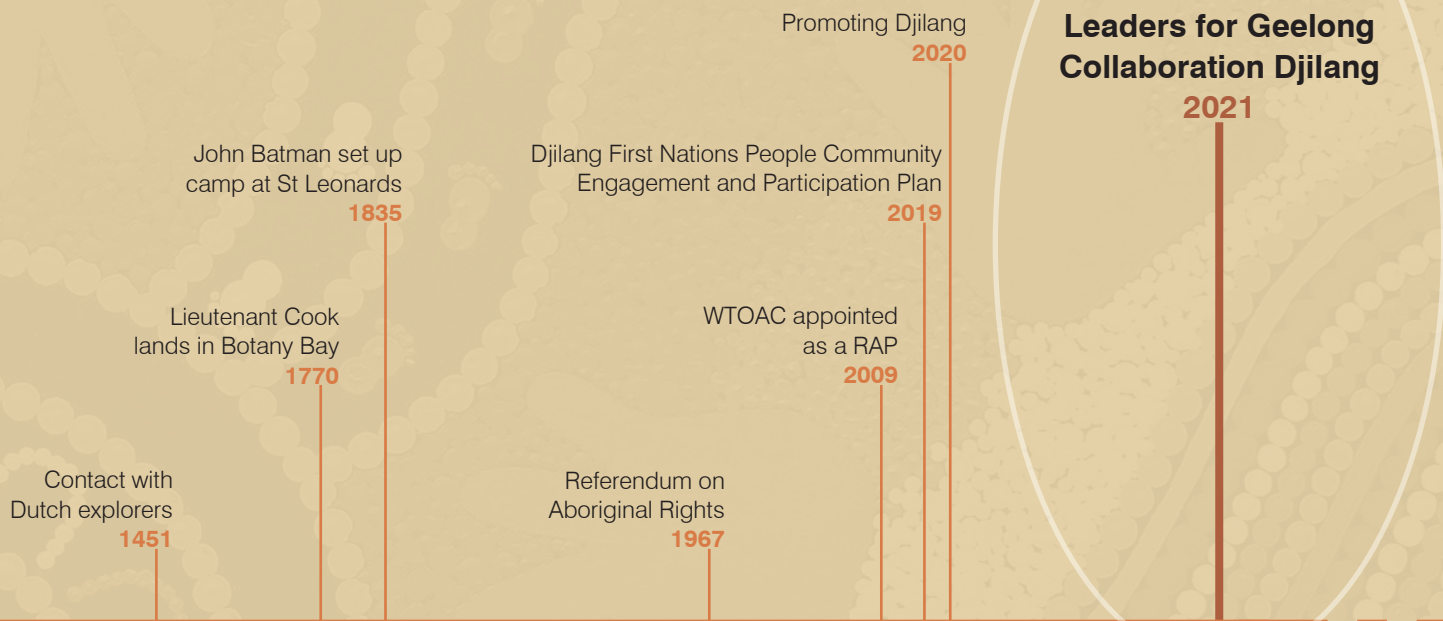
The Chevrons represent the men.

The Murrnong flower represents the women.

The background is Jarosite Ochre, representing Wadawurrung Country. When the whole logo is shown sitting on top of the ochre, it represents Wadawurrung people protecting Country.

Timeline

**Wadawurrung people
living Wadawurrung Country**
65,000+ years ago





Project Purpose and Objectives

The project scope was developed by the Collaboration Djilang Project Team in consultation with the CEO of the WTOAC, Paul Davis. We identified an opportunity to build on the momentum and engagement the previous project group had already created with the WTOAC in shifting from increasing recognition for the Traditional Owners into understanding the business benefits organisations derive from engaging with the WTOAC. The intention was to leverage this understanding to then shift corporate mindsets from obligation and compliance into engagement for mutual benefit.

Project Purpose

Increase engagement of local businesses with the WTOAC, history and Culture across the Djilang region. Specifically, our focus is creating long term partnerships to build recognition of and respect for the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners, and understand the business benefits from connecting with the history and Culture across the Djilang region.

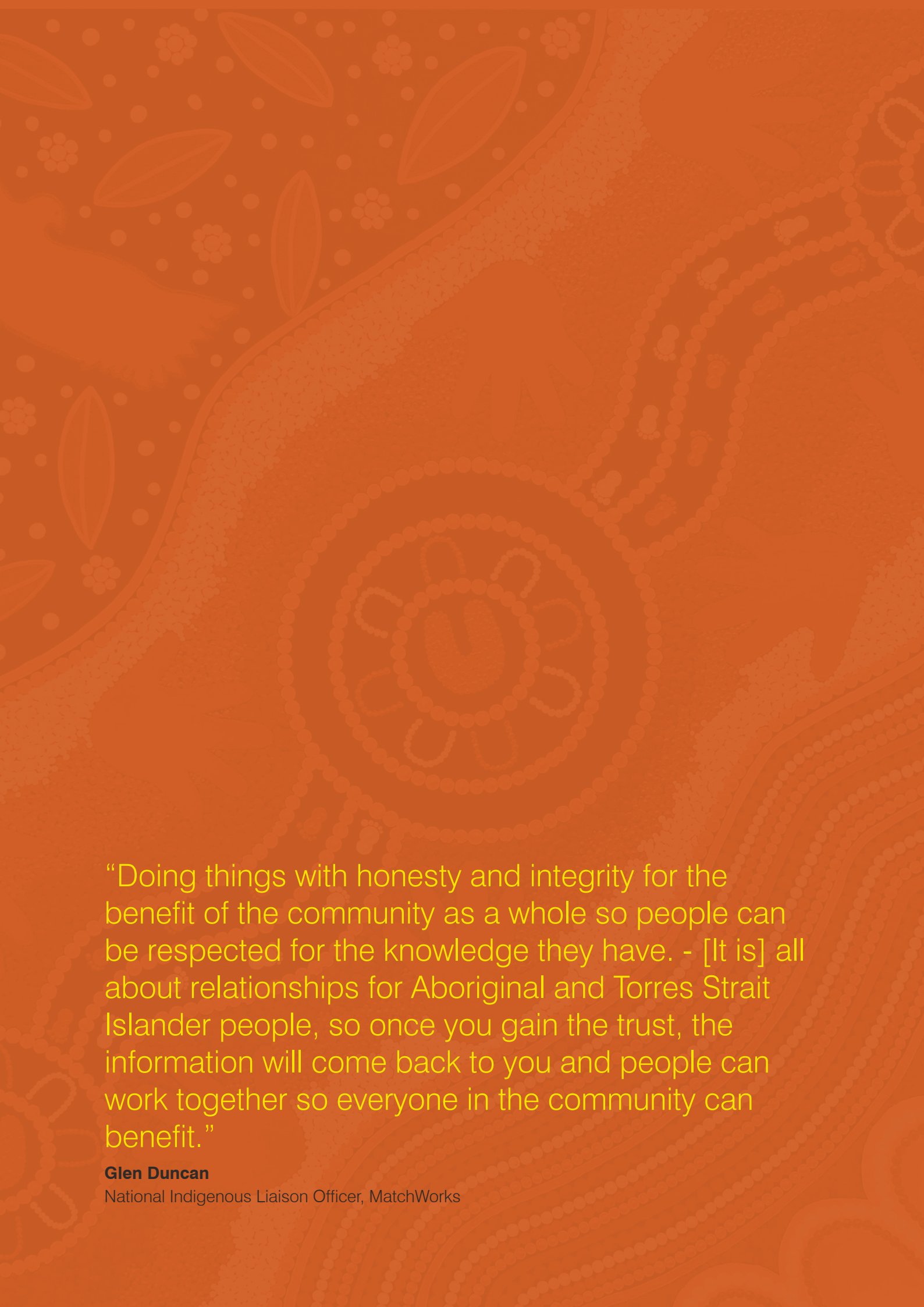
Project Objectives

- Demonstrate the tangible and intangible benefits for organisations from engaging with the WTOAC.
- Build awareness for people arriving into the region that they are now in Wadawurrung Country.
- Reduce barriers to establishing partnerships between local organisations and the WTOAC.
- Provide opportunities to connect the Djilang region on an emotional level with the Culture and history of Wadawurrung Country through the Traditional Owners.

“Knowing who to go to or knowing where to get some of those community supports for our men can be challenging.”

Mark Nestor

Vocational Services Manager, H.M Prison Barwon,
Department of Justice and Community Safety



“Doing things with honesty and integrity for the benefit of the community as a whole so people can be respected for the knowledge they have. - [It is] all about relationships for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, so once you gain the trust, the information will come back to you and people can work together so everyone in the community can benefit.”

Glen Duncan

National Indigenous Liaison Officer, MatchWorks

Project Approach



Initial stakeholder engagement and desktop research identified a critical success factor - this project could not be delivered in isolation; it had to build on the momentum and trust built in this space previously.

To best exemplify and demonstrate the tangible benefits of local organisations seeking to enter working partnerships with the WTOAC, our project group identified two major plans of action that were separate yet connected to drive concurrently.

1. Focus Groups: Develop and implement a strategy to engage with local organisations to gain first-hand insights and qualitative data on the existing engagement with the WTOAC, and to unpack challenges as well as opportunities to enhance future engagements.

2. Avalon Airport Case Study: Identify an organisation which had already commenced engagement with the WTOAC, and build on the momentum to deliver a tangible outcome to then uncover the specific business benefits through this process, and deliver this as a case study.



“We learn from every conversation and interaction with First Nations Peoples where we listen, learn and are prepared to change the way we do things to progress reconciliation, enable self-determination and acknowledge and address past injustices.”

Kate Milburn, Senior Environmental and Aboriginal Values Advisor, Barwon Water

Focus Groups

The project sought to capture the lived and learnt experiences of local organisations with an existing relationship with WTOAC or other First Nations organisations and parties.

Our project team identified the need to engage with multiple organisations of various sizes and industries from across the region with varying levels of engagement with the WTOAC, to gather the most useful insights possible.

To achieve this through a strategic and cohesive approach, we planned and delivered five focus groups in June 2021. The participant list was compiled through various sources and networks (see Appendix).

To steer the focus group conversation, we developed a proforma in consultation with our project sponsor to ensure the information gathered would be beneficial.

Due to COVID-19 the planned face-to-face focus groups were changed to an online format allowing all sessions to continue. We were unsure whether video conference sessions would allow for the same in-depth discussion as an in-person sessions however we were pleasantly surprised with the frankness and quality of conversations.

All sessions were recorded with permission from attendees. The focus groups had between two and six representatives from Djilang organisations, and each ran for one hour.


The participants were asked to comment on three questions:

Q1: What is the nature of your engagement with WTOAC?

Q2: What has been a benefit to your business?

Q3: What are/have been your challenges/learnings with approaching or engaging with WTOAC?

After the focus groups the messages from each of the participants were extracted. We then separated the messages into the categories of nature of engagement, business benefits and learnings/challenges. They were then collated into overarching themes which informed our recommendations.



“One of the big mistakes made in the past was judging everything by the financial implications, and Boral is changing this — it costs whatever it costs”

Vince Scarcella, National Indigenous Affairs Manager, Boral

Focus Group Outcomes

This process has gathered qualitative data and insights from different organisations of various sizes and industries across the region.

Although the experience to date has been vastly different for Djilang organisations, the consistency in themes was clear when looking at how organisations can set up for successful engagement with the WTOAC, and how the WTOAC can set up for success in order to achieve its goal of increasing the number of long-term partnerships.

The participants reported overwhelmingly positive feedback, with Djilang organisations sharing their strong commitment to improving their cultural awareness and recognition of the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners. One pleasing part of the sessions was the interaction between participants and their willingness to share and learn from each other.

The key themes from focus groups were explored as follows

Nature of engagement

The nature of engagement for each of the organisations included in the focus groups differed greatly depending on their type of business and the size of their organisation. This varied from cultural awareness training, involvement in events on Country, Acknowledgement of Country, Welcome to Country and smoking ceremonies.

Cultural Heritage Management Plans are a key part of WTOAC business. For a number of organisations this is how they had first engaged with the WTOAC and this was a way to forge a deeper relationship. Members of the WTOAC act as advisors in a number of organisations where they inform environmental planning, assist Aboriginal liaison officers, act as subject matter experts and provide assistance in contacting other First Nations parties.

Business benefits

The overwhelming majority of Djilang organisations found intangible benefits to their organisations from engaging with the WTOAC. Many organisations found the most important benefit was the increased awareness of Wadawurrung Culture and history and of the gap between the experiences of First Nations people and other Australians. Showing respect for and inclusion of the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners was also a key benefit. There was a desire to connect with the Wadawurrung community and to develop First Nations leadership and voice, through embedding use of Wadawurrung words, and bringing Traditional Owners into the planning and decision-making process especially when projects involve Country.

For the participants identification of a tangible business outcome was challenging. A number of organisations believed that having cultural competence gave them an advantage as a business of choice for other enlightened organisations, especially government departments. There was a desire to show civic leadership and also to have international recognition for their meaningful engagement. Where the engagement was for Cultural Heritage Management Plans the benefit was more obvious as this is a requirement for works on Country.

Challenges and Learnings

Resourcing was a key issue for organisations. Those that have a deep relationship with the Corporation understood the restricted levels of staff at WTOAC and made plans and bookings well in advance of their events and meetings. They ensured that when they did have the time that it was used meaningfully. A key learning from those Djilang organisations that had close relationships was that bringing the WTOAC into their discussions early helped them to have valuable outcomes. They had learned that it was best to ask and act rather than worrying about making a mistake.

Many organisations struggled to find the funding for events and activities with the Corporation because their current business plans didn't allow time, money or people for engagement with First Nations people. When they approached the WTOAC for services it was often at very busy times for the Corporation around key dates for First Nations people, Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week.

Organisations that had limited dealings or were keen to start engagement with the Corporation spoke of concerns about making mistakes. They lacked confidence in approaching the WTOAC and were unsure of how to start. There was confusion over the role of the different First Nations led organisations in Djilang; WTOAC, Narana and the Wathaurong Co-Operative. For those organisations that work across larger parts of Victoria and Australia there was uncertainty over the Registered Aboriginal Party, what this term meant and how to find out who it was. The WTOAC website has a number of online forms but many were unsure of where to begin.

“Don't let mistakes that you make along the way deter you.”

Janice Lane

Manager Healthy Communities, City of Greater Geelong

Case Study: Avalon Airport

Avalon Airport had previously identified opportunities for deepening its engagement with the WTOAC and indicated it was keen to strengthen the existing relationship into more meaningful and impactful collaboration.

Avalon Airport had engaged the WTOAC previously for Cultural Heritage Management Plans when completing expansion activities.

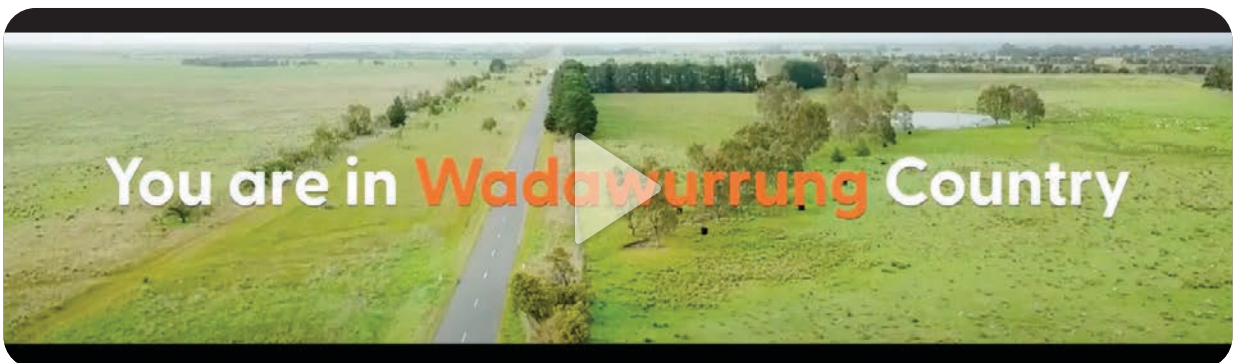
As a major tourism hub for the region, Avalon Airport identified an opportunity to create awareness amongst travellers that they have arrived on Wadawurrung Country.

Following a chaperoned tour of the airport, we collaborated to identify the best opportunities to bring this concept to life. Whilst Avalon Airport was open to providing wall space to display artwork free of charge, it was agreed that the best opportunity to engage travellers was to utilise the video screen above the baggage carousel. This concept ensured best engagement through a dynamic visual and audio piece that would be consumed while travellers are waiting for their luggage.



Avalon Airport's video screens are a commercial advertising space and one element of the airport's commercial strategy. Avalon Airport's generous offer to provide this space free of charge to the WTOAC demonstrated respect and recognition for the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners.

The WTOAC commissioned Joel Wilson, independent video content creator, to develop a content piece specifically for this purpose, to be played to domestic travellers at Avalon Airport.



Case Study Outcomes

Unfortunately, due to the continued uncertainty of Covid-19 which saw lockdowns impact the travel industry, the ability to launch the content piece, and engage travellers as desired was not achieved in this timeframe. Avalon Airport was heavily impacted by the global pandemic, we are grateful to Avalon for dedicating time to this project during such a challenging time.

However, the content piece is finalised, and Avalon Airport will have it on display when its doors are reopened to the public.

Once this is complete, Avalon Airport will be better positioned to uncover and unpack the business benefits. At this stage, it has been hypothesised that the benefits will include:

- Tangible demonstration of respect to the Traditional Owners of the land on which Avalon Airport resides.
- Enhanced consumer experience - content that is relevant and engaging for travellers.
- Sharing of local history with travellers.
- Support the Avalon airport strategic plan to promote the offerings of the Djilang region.
- Opportunities for future Wadawurrung artists to create artwork around the airport.

“We want to move from a transactional to a welcoming relationship.”

Andrew Elliott

Head of Operations, Avalon Airport

Recommendations

Using insights from the focus groups and case study, and collaborating with our project sponsor, the following recommendations are proposed.

Djilang Organisations

1. Local organisations approach engagement with the WTOAC with a mindset of an opportunity for authentic collaboration and partnership rather than obligation.
2. The fear of saying or doing the wrong thing should not be a barrier to engaging with the Traditional Owners or the WTOAC. If an error is made inadvertently, acknowledge, apologise, learn and continue.
3. Local organisations can learn from one another about successful strategies for building sustainable partnerships with the Traditional Owners. Local organisations should consider creating a collaborative working group to share learnings and resources from engagement with the WTOAC. This could be led by a representative of an organisation focused on promoting local business interests such as the Geelong Chamber of Commerce.
4. Local organisations should familiarise themselves with the Healthy Country Plan readily available on the WTOAC website to understand the priorities of the Corporation and build Cultural awareness of the history and story of Djilang.
5. Consider corporate contributions financial or in-kind to the WTOAC to enable sustainable resourcing levels to be acquired to service Wadawurrung Country.
6. Build organisational capacity by installing dedicated First Nations engagement staff. Engagement with the WTOAC should be streamlined through one department.

“Geelong Chamber of Commerce can help and has a role to play in engagement in Geelong. The Board has an appetite to engage... I hope we can provide more practical solutions - pathways for kids to jobs, establish a relationship and link the Corporation to our 1000 members.”

Ben Flynn

CEO, Geelong Chamber of Commerce

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

7. Resourcing and dependency on a singular point of contact is a challenge for the WTOAC to resolve which will enable deeper engagement with local organisations.
8. Engage and upskill a pool of Wadawurrung Traditional Owners in the WTOAC to increase available staffing resources.
9. Develop and promote package deals available to organisations to allocate their WTOAC requirements for a year. This will better enable planning for engaging Traditional Owners as well as the budget and forecasting for both the WTOAC and Djilang organisations.
10. A framework to be developed as a practical toolkit to be developed by WTOAC that will facilitate future pathways for organisations to enter mutually beneficial partnerships with WTOAC.
11. The WTOAC have quarterly stakeholder meetings where organisations share learnings. These organisations could be shared on the WTOAC website.

Other

12. Once Avalon Airport is again fully functioning (with respect to the Covid-19 pandemic), and the video is live at the domestic terminal, there is an opportunity to create positive media coverage in the local region demonstrating Avalon Airport's commitment and respect for the Traditional Owners. This was planned to be delivered as part of this project but the pandemic meant this could not take place during the timeframe. We look forward to understanding how this initiative has benefited both Avalon Airport and the WTOAC.

Covid-19 Pandemic Implications and Impact

By the time our project team was formed, the Covid-19 global pandemic had been impacting the world for a year. Like all other aspects of life, this project was affected by the pandemic in a multitude of ways.

At the beginning of the project, our project team had high aspirations and optimism but the impact of the multiple lock downs and the ongoing restrictions that took place in Victoria restricted the scope, the engagement and the ability to achieve outcomes. Throughout the duration of the project, Victoria was in a near-constant state of restrictions at best, and lock down at worst.

Noting this, our project team adapted by holding our regular team meetings on Zoom, staying connected on WhatsApp and sharing documents on Google Drive. We switched planned in-person engagement events to Zoom.

Team Reflections



Respectful engagement with each other and for the people we sought to engage with was the premise of the team's modus operandi.

Whilst the Collaboration Djilang project itself presented an undeniable opportunity to mould a team mindset into achieving a team goal and affect wider community impact; ultimately there was a shared and relentless pursuit of individual leadership growth experience and a trajectory that was prevalent and recognised to be of equal gravity to the outcomes of the project delivered in partnership with WTOAC.

The attitude, ability and collegiality of each member in the team to allow everyone time and space to switch seamlessly across roles within the team; to lead and be led, to teach and be taught, to influence and be influenced, to inspire and be inspired, to support and be supported, to hear and be heard was a celebration in itself.

A leadership journey is both personal and professional. The project team were nervous about engaging with the WTOAC at the beginning, but resolute in identifying achievable activities for the limited time we had available. Once trust had been established, we discovered a shift within ourselves towards being able to "lean into the discomfort" and look at the bigger picture. The benefits of attempting to engage and getting it wrong, apologising and continuing engagement far outweigh not engaging at all.

The capacity of the team to engage in reflection upon action at each juncture and milestone of the project is testimony to the leadership spirit inherent within the team.

Project Mentor

“I have immensely enjoyed acting as a mentor to the Collaboration Djilang project group. I have been impressed with their team work and collaboration, their support of each other, and their effective project planning and delegation of responsibilities and tasks. I believe that these qualities have enabled them to deliver tangible value to the Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and other important stakeholders in a short timeframe. I wholeheartedly congratulate the project group on their successful delivery of their project and their completion of the Leaders for Geelong program.”



Dan Clair

Senior Manager, Client Housing Strategy, Sectors and Research Division
TAC

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Appendix

Workshop Participants

Sarah Albon, General Manager, Geelong Football Club

Caitlin Arklay, Team Administrator, Moore Australia

Kate Bibby, Director Public Affairs, Barwon Health

Laura Bishop, Gas Terminal Project Approvals Lead, Viva Energy Australia

Jack Buckley, Operations/Marketing Manager, Steigen

Martin De Lange, Regional Manager, V-Line

Glen Duncan, National Indigenous Liaison Officer, MatchWorks

Andrew Elliott, Head of Operations, Avalon Airport

Ben Flynn, CEO, Geelong Chamber of Commerce

Penny Hamilton, General Manager, Hamilton Group

Ged Hart, Managing Director, Total Outdoor Media

Janice Lane, Manager Healthy Communities, City of Greater Geelong

Kate Milburn, Senior Environmental and Aboriginal Values Advisor, Barwon Water

Mark Nestor, Vocational Services Manager, H.M Prison Barwon, Department of Justice and Community Safety

Representative, Department of Justice Victoria

Vince Scarcella, National Indigenous Affairs Manager, Boral

Emy Simsic, Secretary, Geelong Swim Club

Robyn Stevens, Director of Community Life, City of Greater Geelong

Vanda Strange, Community Engagement Manager, Viva Energy Australia

Cheryl Taylor, Research Scientist, CSIRO Agriculture & Food

Bojana Zabic, Advisor, WorkSafe Victoria

