



# WUNGGURRIL NGITJ

## Strong together

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation  
and Melbourne Water Corporation Partnership Agreement



**Wadawurrung**  
Traditional Owners  
Aboriginal Corporation



**Melbourne**  
Water

## Spirit of Partnership

This Partnership Agreement sets out the framework under which Melbourne Water and Wadawurrung will work together to support and implement the *Paleert Tjaara Dja – let's make Country good together 2020-2030 Wadawurrung Country Plan* across the **yaluk** (waters), **Dja** (Country) and skies of Wadawurrung Country.

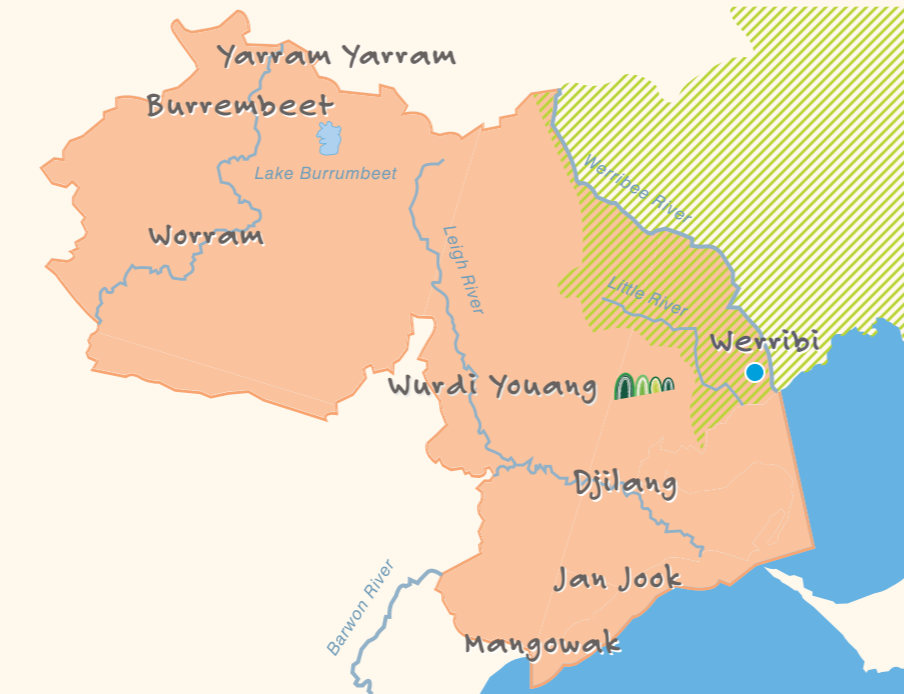
## Guiding Principles

The following principles from the *Wadawurrung Country Plan* will guide the relationship:

- Respect and Acknowledgement for Wadawurrung Traditional Owners knowledge and language, and our cultural, ancestral, spiritual and historical connections to Country
- We seek partnerships that are genuine, are of benefit to Wadawurrung people, are in the spirit of reconciliation, that address past negative impacts and enable self-determination and real outcomes
- Wadawurrung people's right to access and care for Country as an expression of our cultural obligation, responsibilities, connectedness, our well-being and as our economic basis
- Providing appropriate and equitable resourcing for Wadawurrung people to participate in their obligation of care and management of Country
- Country is interconnected, alive with dreaming and creation stories, imprinted with our cultural values and social history – there is no separation between cultural and natural resources and people
- Open and honest relationships that sustain effective working partnerships
- Wadawurrung Traditional Owners are the holders of cultural knowledge
- Free, prior and informed consent requires genuine engagement from the beginning of decision-making or project planning in a way that is relevant to us, providing timely information and processes that support cultural governance
- Respect for and appropriate protection of our intellectual and cultural property rights in sharing information

## Wadawurrung Country

Wadawurrung Country encompasses one million hectares. The area from the Great Dividing Range of Ballarat to the coast from **Werribi Yaluk** (Werribee River) to **Mangowak** (Airey's Inlet). Wadawurrung Country includes **Djilang** (Geelong), **Ballarat** (Ballarat), Torquay, **Jan Jook** (Jan Juc) the **Bellawiyn** (Bellarine) Peninsula and the Surf Coast. This Agreement applies to the Wadawurrung Country that Melbourne Water have land and water management responsibilities for, as the map below shows.



- Wadawurrung Country
- ▨ Melbourne Water service area
- Western Treatment Plant
- Rivers
- Lakes
- 🌿 You Yangs Regional Park



## Partners

### Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (WTOAC) is an Aboriginal-owned corporation. It was appointed as a Registered Aboriginal Party in 2009, with statutory rights under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

This means we are the legally recognised authority for protecting and caring for our Cultural heritage and our people are the custodians of Wadawurrung Country, Waters and Culture.

WTOAC represents over 380 current members, advocating for and responding to the needs of the Wadawurrung community in their self-determination. We achieve this by seeking and coordinating the resources, partnerships, and activities necessary to protect and strengthen culture, to manage, **yaluk** (waters), **warri** (sea) and **Dja** (Country) and support community health and well-being.

To do this we follow in the cultural journey and footsteps of our Ancestors and honour the strength and resilience of their fight to see Wadawurrung Traditional Owners today recognised and with a rightful place in **Gobata Dja** – Caring for Country.



### Melbourne Water Corporation

Melbourne Water touches all parts of the water cycle that are essential to our way of life: from providing clean drinking water, treating sewage, planning to manage flooding, and keeping Melbourne's rivers, creeks and catchments healthy.

In Melbourne, Water is essential to our way of life and so is the work we do to enhance the natural environment we live in and the communities we are part of.

From providing clean drinking water, treating sewage so we can recover and re-use our valued resources, working within our community to reduce flood risk, and keeping all 25,000km of Melbourne's rivers, creeks and catchments healthy, we manage all parts of the water cycle that are essential to our way of life today, tomorrow and for generations to come.

Through all that we do, we recognise that the Traditional Owners of the region have connections to and hold ancient knowledge of the land and water that are inseparable from their lives. In tending to all the rivers, creeks and surrounding land of our greatest backyard, we work as partners, we listen, and we tell the truth with Traditional Owners throughout our region.

### Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is an advisory group with representatives from each organisation. It guides the partnership, projects and activity under the four themes. Members have working knowledge of the theme areas and support project managers in implementing projects.

## Themes and Key Priorities

### Cultural Services

- Wadawurrung provide language, consultation, artworks and ceremony and cultural awareness services
- Incorporation of cultural interpretation and stories into visitor and office infrastructure

- Wadawurrung input and interest reflected in policy, strategy and planning

### Water Policy and Strategy

- Enabling Wadawurrung access to water rights and entitlements, including storm/recycled water

- Access and involvement in Major Project Development planning cycles

- Sharing and building whole of system water knowledge through research and forums

### Cultural Heritage

- Cultural Values assessments and management program for 3 landscapes: Western treatment plant (WTP), **Werribi Yaluk** (Werribee River) **Worriin-Yaloke** (Little River)

- Cultural heritage agreements are in place to support management

- Co-designed natural resource management planning and implementation across landscapes / **Dja**.

### Caring for Country

- **Wiyin Murrup** – Wadawurrung bringing fire spirit back to **Dja** and healing grasslands

- Wadawurrung seasonal calendars developed, guiding Caring for Country contracted work and promoting biodiversity

- Cultural business opportunities *i.e.* harvesting grass seed

- Development of a monitoring program that incorporates cultural knowledge and indicators

# About the art

## Chloe Chatterton

*Walking on Wadawurrung Dja*

**Ngubiti** (water) is the heartbeat of all things living. Wadawurrung Country is rich in a variety of different saltwater and freshwater water bodies.

*Walking on Wadawurrung Dja* celebrates these beautiful water bodies. For many years our people have cared for and nurtured these waterways, which were used for trade, ceremonies and gatherings, as represented by a meeting place.

This piece is dominated by a confluence, where two water bodies merge, expressing the community coming together to ensure that our waterways continue to heal and be cared for, for generations to come. Across the top of the piece are the You Yangs, which can be seen from areas on Wadawurrung Country, and a series of footprints representative of our connection to and journeys on Country.



## Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

### Chairperson

Greg Robison

Print name

Signature

### Chief Executive Officer

Liam Murphy

Print name

Signature

## Melbourne Water

### Chairperson

JOHN THWAITES

Print name

Signature

### Managing Director

NERINA DI LORENZO

Print name

Signature

As signatories of this agreement, the Wadawurrung and the Melbourne Water Corporation commit to work together towards the shared objectives and opportunities that meet our respective goals.

Agreed by all parties on the 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023.

The Term of the Agreement is 5 years with annual review of progress against the theme priorities. It may be updated as required and agreed by both partners.

