

# WATHAURONG ABORIGINAL CO-OPERATIVE



2024/2025 Annual Report

# Welcome to Country

*Kim Barne Barre Wadda Wurrung, Kitarra ngitj. Gin Gin bail wada nidg. Bar Nar Weering Nidj.*

*“Welcome to Wadda Wurrung Country, let us walk together and learn in peace.”*

We would like to thank and pay respect to the Traditional Owners of the land on which we deliver our services. Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative provides services on Wathaurong, Gulidjan, Gadabanud and Boonwurrung countries. We would also like to acknowledge and pay respect to our Elders, both past and present, to the members of the Aboriginal community and to the community leaders.



## 2024 / 2025 ARTWORK



This year's artwork is a digital piece created by Wathaurong member and proud Dharug Ngyiampaa women, **Donna Conley**. Donna is a contemporary artist living on Wadawarrung country whose work explores identity, place and lived experience. Donna created this piece to celebrate and reflect on the many achievements of Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative in 2024/25.

Wathaurong's Commitment To Action plan outlines our goals, objectives and how we want to reach them. Centred in all of this is the "Wathaurong Way" – how we want to work, how we centre culture in everything that we do, and how we make sure that Community is our first priority always.

## our Vision & Purpose

• Strong Community • Strong Culture • Strong Country.

We are here to connect, support and advocate for our Community to live their best lives. Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative aims to provide culturally appropriate health, education, aged, disability, housing and cultural services.

## our Foundations

• Community • Culture • Voice • Innovation

## our Values - CARE

• Courage • Accountability • Respect • Engagement

*Disclaimer: While all care has been taken to ensure that information and figures contained in this report are correct at the time of publication, details were based on information at hand at the time, and changes in circumstances after the time of printing may impact the accuracy of its information.*

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this document may contain images and names of deceased persons.*

*NB - for the purposes of this document, the term "Aboriginal" refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons.*





# Contents

|  |           |   |           |  |           |
|--|-----------|---|-----------|--|-----------|
| <b>Profiles of the Current Board Members</b> _____ | <b>2</b>  | <b>Family Services</b> _____  | <b>30</b> | <b>Health Services</b> _____             | <b>40</b> |
| <b>Wathaurong Board Report</b> _____               | <b>4</b>  | Staff _____   | 30        | Staff _____                              | 40        |
| <b>CEO &amp; Deputy CEO Report</b> _____           | <b>6</b>  | Executive Manager Report _____  | 31        | Executive Manager Report _____           | 42        |
| Kanyool Karoong Youth Hub _____                    | 8         | Family Services _____   | 32        | Health Services _____                    | 44        |
| Community Strengthening _____                      | 10        | Integrated Family Services (IFS) and<br>Family Preservation and Reunification (FPR) _____ | 32        | Health Promotions _____                  | 44        |
| Colac Aboriginal Gathering Place _____             | 11        | Out of Home Care _____  | 32        | Women's & Children's Program _____       | 46        |
| Western District ACCO Collective _____             | 12        | Aboriginal Family Lead Decision Making<br>(AFLDM) and Cultural Support Planning _____     | 32        | Social & Emotional Wellbeing _____       | 47        |
| <b>Organisational Chart</b> _____                  | <b>14</b> | Better Futures _____  | 32        | Balert Care Connections _____            | 49        |
| <b>Corporate Services</b> _____                    | <b>15</b> | Kinship Care and Home Based Care<br>(Foster Care) _____                                   | 33        | (NDIS & Aged Care support)               |           |
| Staff _____  | 15        | Foster Care Recruitment _____   | 33        | <b>Wathaurong Glass &amp; Arts</b> _____ | <b>50</b> |
| Executive Manager Report _____                     | 16        | Early Years _____   | 34        | Financial Summary _____                  | 50        |
| People & Performance _____                         | 17        | Aboriginal Best Start Program Mingo Waloom _____  | 34        | Sales Breakdown _____                    | 50        |
| Housing _____                                      | 18        | Bupup Balak Wayipungang -<br>Koori Pre-school Advisor Program<br>(KPSA) _____             | 34        | Operation _____                          | 51        |
| Garden and Building Services _____                 | 18        | Milla Milla and Kitjarra Booboop<br>(Playgroups) _____                                    | 35        | Staff _____                              | 51        |
| Fleet _____  | 19        | Balert Gerrbik – Koori Families<br>as First Educators (KFFE) _____                        | 35        | Retail / Wholesale Glass Art _____       | 51        |
| Occupational Health & Safety _____                 | 19        | Family Violence _____   | 36        | Architectural Glass _____                | 51        |
| Infrastructure _____                               | 20        | Holistic Family Violence Case Management _____  | 36        | Miscellaneous Glass _____                | 51        |
| Information Technology _____                       | 22        | Therapeutic Family Violence Program _____   | 36        | <b>Our Partners</b> _____                | <b>52</b> |
| Quality & Compliance _____                         | 23        | Men's Family Violence Case Management _____   | 36        | <b>Financial Report</b> _____            | <b>54</b> |
| Wurdi Youang _____                                 | 24        | Orange Door _____   | 37        | Director's Report _____                  | 54        |
| Marketing, Communications & Events _____           | 25        | Calming Waters _____  | 37        | Auditor's Independence Declaration _____ | 56        |
| Community Event Numbers _____                      | 26        | Justice _____   | 37        | Director's Declaration _____             | 73        |
| NAIDOC Week _____                                  | 28        | Homelessness _____  | 38        | Independent Auditor's Report _____       | 74        |



# Profiles of the current Board Members



## Jordan Edwards

Jordan Edwards is a proud Gunditjmara, Waddawurrung & Arrernte man. He has grown up in the Wathaurong community and has been involved in community and cultural business all his life. Jordan is currently one of the South West representatives on the First Peoples' Assembly and is the Youth Convenor for the Assembly. He has been leading the conversations to make sure that community are knowledgeable and empowered when it comes to Treaty and is passionate about making sure that the youth have a voice. Jordan was one of the leaders who advocated for and led the youth discussions around standing up the Karroong Kanyool Youth Hub in Forster Street.



## Debby Lovett

Debby was elected to the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Board in November 2024. Debby is a proud Gunditjmara woman from Lake Condah with ties to Boandik. She brings strong family and community values and decades of expertise in governance, education, leadership development and community engagement. Now living on the Surf Coast, Debby is a mother to two amazing young adults and Nanny to five beautiful grandchildren. Currently with the National Native Title Council, Debby has dedicated her life to empowering Aboriginal communities across Victoria. Her extensive experience includes 20+ years with state and national sports carnivals, active member of the Victorian NAIDOC Committee (1996-2003), Director of VAYSAR (1998-2002), Chairperson of the Werribee/Hoppers Crossing LAECG & ASSPA (1997-2001), identified roles with ATSIC, DEET and DSE, and eight years as Indigenous Programs Manager at Collingwood Football Club.



## Judy Dalton-Walsh

Judy Dalton-Walsh is a Wadda Wurrung Traditional Owner who has always been involved in Community and Wathaurong life. Judy works as a Koorie Engagement Support Officer at the Department of Education and Training.



## Charmaine Hopgood

Charmaine was elected to the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Board in November 2024. Charmaine is a proud Gunditjmara woman (Nilan Gunditj, Kerrup Jmara, and Kirrae Wurrong) who was born and raised on Wathaurong Country and now resides on Gulidjan and Gadubanud Country near Colac and the Otways. She brings extensive experience across community services, education, and tourism, including over 10 years at Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative in roles such as Koorie Preschool Liaison Officer, Home and Community Care Coordinator, and administrative support to the Board of Directors. She later assisted Koorie Liaison programs in the South-West and managed a travel business in Colac before transitioning to Cultural Tourism. Charmaine has been deeply involved with the Colac community through her work at the Caracaramigen Gathering Place, local events and meetings. Appointed to the Wathaurong Board in November 2024, she is proud to represent Colac and surrounding regions, advocating for community wellbeing, resources, infrastructure development and aspirations.



## Prof. Wendy Brabham

Professor Wendy Brabham is a Traditional Owner from the Wamba Wamba, Wergaia, Nyeri Nyeri and Dhudhuroa first nations. Wendy is a respected academic who has been a representative on various boards and committees.



## Glenn Shea

Glenn Shea has worked for and with Wathaurong in several roles including Youth Justice and Wathaurong's 40 Year Anniversary film and events. He is an acclaimed and awarded playwright, director and actor, including Aboriginal truth-telling. Glenn has sat on the Board of Directors at Ilbijerri Theatre Company for over 7 years and was elected to the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Board in February 2023.



## Ammie Howell

Ammie is a Central Arrente woman born and raised on Wathaurong Country. She is a mum to 6 proud Arrente/Bundjalung kids and is an active member of the Wathaurong community. Ammie is also a former staff member of Wathaurong and Wathaurong Glass. Ammie was co-opted to the Board in December 2022 and was elected to the Board by Community in February 2023.



## Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Ltd Board Directors for the financial year 2024-2025

| Director          | Date of commencement as Director / Office Holder | Date of cessation as Director | Number of eligible meetings for 2024/25 | Number of eligible meetings attended |
|-------------------|--|-------------------------------|---|--------------------------------------|
| Judy Dalton-Walsh | 19/9/2018 (last re-elected 24/11/2024)           |                               | 11                                      | 11                                   |
| Wendy Brabham     | 7/12/2017 (last re-elected 3/3/2024)             |                               | 11                                      | 9                                    |
| Ammie Howell      | 13/1/2023 (last co-opted 18/12/2024)             |                               | 10                                      | 10                                   |
| Glenn Shea        | 26/2/2023 (last re-elected 24/11/2024)           |                               | 11                                      | 9                                    |
| Jordan Edwards    | 3/3/2024   |                               | 11                                      | 9                                    |
| Debby Lovett      | 24/11/2024                                       |                               | 7                                       | 7                                    |
| Charmaine Hopgood | 24/11/2024                                       |                               | 7                                       | 7                                    |



# WATHAURONG BOARD REPORT



Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative's (Wathaurong) Board of Directors acknowledges that the Country we work and live on is, and has always been, Wathaurong Country. We provide support services to our Community living on Wathaurong, Boonwurrung, Culidjan, and Gadubanud country. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and all Aboriginal people who have contributed to the strength of our Community and cultural society today.

The 2024/25 financial year has been a period of significant growth, challenge, and achievement for our organisation and Community. This report highlights the outstanding work delivered by Wathaurong, our commitment to *Strong Community, Strong Culture, Strong Country*, and our ongoing journey to provide culturally safe and impactful services.

## Key Achievements of 2024/2025:

- **Financial Strength:** We recorded a \$205K surplus, a strong outcome given Wathaurong's growth. This positive financial result highlights our effective management during a period of expansion and reflects our commitment to sustainability as the organisation continues to address challenges and meet Community needs.
- **Board Governance:** We filled the two newly created Board positions for Colac and Wyndham after the Community endorsed Wathaurong's new rulebook at our Special General Meeting in March 2024. The two inaugural appointments were Colac - Charmaine Hoppood and Wyndham - Aunty Judy Dalton-Walsh.

- **Colac Gathering Place:** We purchased a new house for the Colac Community in Birregurra, while we continue to develop plans for a permanent home in Colac in the future.
- **Boon Boon Cultural Centre:** After long discussions Wathaurong entered into an agreement with Uniting Church to acquire Narana, now known as Boon Boon. We officially opened the doors in March 2025, and we are excited about the future Boon will provide to our Community.
- **Morgan Street Redevelopment:** We continue to progress the Morgan Street Redevelopment Project, with the aim to be completed by 2027.
- **VACSAL Carnival:** For a second consecutive year we hosted the VACSAL Senior Football & Netball Carnival, this year we hosted it in Portarlington on 5th & 6th October 2024 attracting over 3,000 Community.
- **Djilang Sporting Organisation:** Wathaurong supported the establishment of a local Community committee to lead Geelong's participation across youth and adult sporting events. Djilang has hit the ground running with the aim to have participants across the youth and adult football and netball carnivals in 2025.
- **First Peoples United Together Djilang:** Wathaurong participated in establishing the First peoples United Together Djilang group. This action was in response to the decision made by the Geelong City Council on December 10, 2024, which went against the unanimous resolutions of May 23, 2023, as outlined in the City's community engagement report, *A Conversation About January 26: Full Engagement Report*.

- **Food Relief:** We continue to further strengthen our relationship with Geelong Foodshare, ensuring our Community has access to food during difficult times. The Board extends heartfelt thanks to our Community members, staff, and partners for their ongoing support. We look forward to an exciting 2025/26 year, with the launch of new initiatives, continued progress on major projects, and a renewed commitment to Cultural strength and Community wellbeing. Together, we aspire to be an organisation that our Community can be proud of.

Nyatne, Gobota (Thanks, Take Care).  
**Wathaurong Board of Directors**





# CEO & Deputy CEO Report

## Simon Flagg & Rose De Jong

Firstly, we would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians on the lands we provide supports to our Community living on Wathaurong, Boonwurrung, Gulidjan, and Gadubanud countries. We pay our respects to Elders past, present, and to all Aboriginal people on Country.

### Year in Review

It has been another busy and successful year for Wathaurong as our Community and organisation continue to grow. As of the end of the 2024-25 financial year, we had 220 staff members, which highlights how much we have grown as an organisation and the need for our Morgan Street redevelopment to consolidate our staff and community supports at the home of the Co-op.

- **Finances:** We increased and improved our 2024/25 financial position to \$27.6 million annual turnover (an increase of \$3.9m compared to 2023/24).
- **Housing and Homelessness Support:** We were successful in securing 3-years additional funding to maintain our Housing and Homelessness team.
- **Staffing:** Our staffing numbers have increased to 223 staff as of 30 June 2025 (an increase of 24 positions compared to 2023/24).
- **Western District ACCO Collective (WDAC):** WDAC has become an integral advocacy body for the West of Victoria, ensuring the West of Victoria gets adequate access to funding and programs for our Communities. Please see the WDAC Annual Report update in the report.

- **Increase in GP appointments:** To meet our Communities needs we have revised our GP appointments from 30 minutes to 20 minutes creating an extra 120 consults per-week.
- **Mobile Health Clinic:** We completed our fit out of Wathaurong's Mobile medical Clinic, be on the lookout for it across our region, with a focus on Colac and Wyndham.

### Major Project - Booln Booln Culture Centre

Wathaurong proudly acquired and reopened the Booln Booln Culture Centre (formerly Narana), returning this important cultural space to Aboriginal community ownership after nearly three decades. "Booln Booln" means Lyrebird in Waddawurrung language, symbolising the many mobs coming together as one community.

Booln Booln is now a vibrant hub for cultural connection, learning, community gathering, and economic development. The Centre offers cultural education, ceremonies, workshops, and a welcoming space for community events and healing. The retail store and café showcase authentic Aboriginal products and local bush foods, supporting Aboriginal artists and small businesses. This has been done to ensure that our local community is at the forefront of these opportunities, with expressions of interest going out community wide to select products and artworks to be on display at the space. The site's gardens, native animals, and art gallery

provide unique opportunities for visitors to connect with Country and Culture.

The reopening of Booln Booln marks a significant milestone for Wathaurong, strengthening our vision of *Strong Community, Strong Culture, Strong Country*, and ensuring that Aboriginal culture is celebrated, shared, and sustained for future generations. We have been able to host many gatherings here, including Community meetings, the Christmas Party, and many trainings and workshops.

There were a few staff changes over the 2024-25 financial year. We welcome all our new staff and thank our outgoing staff for their work and commitment, wishing them all the best in their next journey.

Throughout this report, you will see more stories of the great work our team has done over the year. We would like to say thank you to our Community, Staff, Executive team, and Board for all the amazing work we have done together over the 2024-25 year to provide supports and programs for our mob. We are stronger together, and I look forward to continuing our journey together *Strong Community, Strong Culture, Strong Country*.  
Nyatne (thank you)



Scan QR for video link



### Office of the CEO Staff

- Simon Flagg** - Chief Executive Officer
- Rose De Jong** - Deputy Chief Executive Officer
- Leah Parker** - Executive Business Support Officer
- Angela Walsh** - Strategic Policy Officer
- Nadia Albert** - Strategic Policy Officer
- Jessie Motlik** - Strategic Projects Partner
- David Tournier** - Cultural Project Officer
- Kristi Watts** - Cultural Project Officer

### Community Strengthening

- Jordyn Flagg** - Manager
- Jayden Hickey** - Team Leader
- Joniemaree Marty** - Journey Walker
- Blake Natoli-West** - Journey Walker
- Vaughan Gray** - Journey Walker
- Sandra Manning** - Elders Facilitator
- Rylie Evans** - Healing Therapist

### Youth Hub

- Lily Edwards** - Youth Services Manager
- Jasmine Knox** - Youth Services Team Leader
- Natalie Murphy** - Youth Project Officer
- Isaiah Harrison** - Youth Services Liaison
- Shikara Yeaman** - Youth Project Officer

### Colac Gathering Place

- Ebony Hickey** - Colac Aboriginal Gathering Place Manager
- Tanisha Clarke** - Colac Aboriginal Gathering Place Support Officer



# Karroong Kanyool Report

Shoutout to the dedicated staff at Karroong Kanyool youth hub for always making the space welcoming, culturally safe, and enjoyable for our young mob.

Over the past 12 months, staffing increased to 4 FTE positions. One of these staff members, Natalie Murphy, completed her AFL Sports Ready Traineeship at Karroong Kanyool and has now obtained ongoing full-time employment.

The appointment of a team leader has provided the team with enhanced consistency and stability, allowing

the Youth Services Manager to maintain a focus on the growth and sustainability of Karroong Kanyool.

This year, the focus has been on building relationships with local young mob in community ensuring the foundation is based on trust, integrity, and transparency. The team has used creative approaches to engage young mob and adapt programs to their evolving needs.

At Karroong Kanyool, all programs are developed with input from young participants to increase engagement and relevance. The organisation aims to include

empowerment and participant feedback at each stage of its programming approach.

Over the next 12 months, efforts will be directed towards stabilising and consistently delivering high-quality programming, while also increasing participation and engagement across all age groups. Karroong Kanyool is particularly committed to expanding involvement among individuals aged 18 and over, aiming to ensure that support and programming are accessible and engaging for this demographic as well.



# Karroong Kanyool Programs

A variety of shorter programs have taken place over the past 12 months to address the needs and interests of young people in the community, while the Young Aboriginal Mentoring Program has continued. Additionally, a leadership academy and an ongoing youth group were established this year.

## Young Aboriginal Mentoring Program (YAM)

The Young Aboriginal Mentoring Program (YAM) supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary students with weekly Monday sessions during school terms. The program offers mentoring, cultural connection, peer engagement, and develops life skills, nutrition, literacy, numeracy, and social skills for 25-45 participants each week.

## Youth Group

The Karroong Kanyool Youth group began in 2025 and is open to individuals aged 13-28. The program takes place weekly on Wednesday evenings during the school term. Its areas of focus include social connection, cultural engagement, personal development, life skills, nutrition, health and wellbeing, literacy, and numeracy.

## Kadna Kawa Leadership Academy

Founded in 2025, the Kadna Kawa Leadership Academy offers young people aged 12-17 and 18-28 opportunities to build leadership skills. "Kadna Kawa," meaning "to climb a mountain" in Wadda Wurrung, reflects the program's focus on aspiration and accountability. Participants contribute to their communities and serve as positive role models, with the option for any young mob to join when ready for leadership.

## Girls program and Boys programs

In 2025, Karroong Kanyool implemented a six-week girls' program and a six-week brotherhood program.

Both initiatives centred on respectful relationships, consent, mental health, and other gender-specific topics. These programs were delivered in a culturally safe and youth-oriented manner, fostering open discussions on subjects that may be challenging to address. Through constructive communication, participants were supported in developing a deeper understanding of their roles within the community as adolescents.

## Swimming Lessons

In 2025, Wathaurong resumed community swimming lessons, offering age-appropriate and culturally safe classes for under 3s (weekly sessions over six weeks with parents/carers), 5-10 year olds, and 11-17 year olds (both in a four-day school holiday program). All groups participated successfully, and we plan to continue these lessons every school holiday.

## Cooking Program

Karroong Kanyool hosted a 6-week cooking basics program for young mob, where participants learned nutrition, food safety, dietary catering, and how to prepare basic meals, desserts, and sides. Led by a qualified chef, the program equipped young people with the skills to cook for their families.

## Youth Photography Program

A six-week photography basics program at Karroong Kanyool, led by photographer Tiffany Garvie, taught participants image composition and storytelling through imagery. After the course, young people paired with elders and respected community members to capture photos based on shared stories. The program concluded with a photography exhibition at Booln Booln Gallery during NAIDOC Week, which drew over 70 attendees. Notably, one participant is now employed as a photographer by Wathaurong.

## Camps

Over the last 12 months the young people at Karroong Kanyool Youth hub have had the opportunity to participate in 3 camps.

Dungulayin Mileka program attended the Massive Murray Paddle, in November 2024, young people participated in paddling 415km of the Murray River over 5 days. A big congratulations to Jida Apma Hayes who individually clocked 100kms on the river.

The Kadna Kawa Leadership academy 12-17 year olds camp held in Ocean Grove. Young people spent 3 days developing the skeleton of a social enterprise concept that they are aiming to launch in February 2026 "Stay Tuned".

Young people involved in the consultation and development stage of Karroong Kanyool Youth hub across 2020-2023 participated in a cross-community camp in Bendigo. They engaged with a community working to establish a youth hub, providing a cross-cultural learning opportunity. The Bendigo group learned about the local group's progress with Karroong Kanyool, while the local youth gained insights from Bendigo's experience developing a youth advisory committee—something they also aspire to achieve at Karroong Kanyool.

## Cultural book

Over an 18-month period, the team at Karroong Kanyool developed a youth cultural connection resource designed for accessibility by all young people. The book was created by young people, featuring resources they produced, artwork by a local artist, and language and stories contributed by Wadda Wurrung Traditional Owners. A big thank you to Natalie Murphy, Shikara Yeaman, and Lily Edwards who coordinated the project, which is now available through the Karroong Kanyool youth hub.

# Community Strengthening

Across the 2024/2025 financial year, we have had over 70 community members come through our program for long term support.

Over the past 12 months, the Community Strengthening Team has navigated significant staffing transitions while deepening its commitment to culturally grounded support through the Aboriginal Access Points Program. Central to this evolution has been the work of our Journey Walkers, who have provided long-term, goal-oriented support to over 70 community members.

A major milestone during this period was the team's relocation from Morgan Street to Kardinia Park. This move was prompted by the planned closure of the Morgan Street site to make way for the Morgan Street Redevelopment Project—an exciting initiative that will enhance our ability to deliver culturally safe and community-focused services into the future.

In line with our commitment to embed culture in all aspects of our work, the team collaborated to create message sticks—a meaningful symbol of achievement

and connection. These are gifted to community members who complete their goals with their Journey Walker. Designed by Natalie Murphy, the artwork burned onto each stick tells a powerful story:

- The first circle, surrounded by six figures, represents our team of Journey Walkers.
- The second circle illustrates the shared journey between a Journey Walker and a community member, walking side by side.
- The third circle symbolizes the community member, strong and proud, ready to continue their journey with confidence and cultural pride.

The reverse side of each message stick is left blank, inviting community members to add their own story—making each piece a personal and evolving cultural artifact.

Our weekly Gather Art Group, held every Wednesday afternoon at Booln Booln, continues to be a vibrant space for creativity and connection. With around 10 regular attendees and a variety of facilitators exploring

different artistic mediums, the group fosters healing, expression, and community spirit. We were also fortunate to receive \$10,000 through the Health and Connected Communities Project Grant from the City of Greater Geelong to support our weekly Gather Art Program.

Additionally, we've supported community wellbeing through practical assistance, including the distribution of Food Bank vouchers, ensuring that basic needs are met while individuals work toward their personal and cultural goals.

Despite the challenges of change, the Community Strengthening Team remains deeply committed to walking alongside our community—strong, proud, and connected.



# Colac Aboriginal Gathering Place

The 2024/2025 year has been one of significant change for the Colac Aboriginal Gathering Place. In December 2024, we said farewell to Caracaramigen House at 4 Miller Street, and in June 2025, we also farewelled our valued team member, Shelly.

Despite these changes, this year has been full of opportunity and adventure. While transitioning from a permanent office back to outreach services, we have been fortunate to share meaningful on Country experiences with community across Gulidjan and Gadubanud Meerreeng. We are deeply grateful for the flexibility, patience, and ongoing support shown by community throughout this time.

We were also proud to host and support a number of significant events, including the Aboriginal Justice Community Forum 68 and exhibitions at RRRTAG,

Anglesea Art Space, and COPACC. These events highlighted the strength, creativity, and leadership of our community, and we thank our partners, supporters, and community members for standing alongside us each week as we continue to advocate for and celebrate our mob. Our vision remains clear; to create lasting opportunities for connection through kinship, culture, and community, and to continue working towards a permanent home for the Colac Aboriginal Gathering Place.

In April 2025, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative purchased 35 Barry Street, Birregurra, which will serve as our temporary home once the required permits and building works are completed. Our long-term goal remains unchanged; to secure a permanent, central location and return to Colac in the coming years.

We acknowledge the challenges we have faced, including the lack of funding for staffing and infrastructure during this financial year. Nevertheless, our resilience and commitment remain strong.

We encourage everyone to stay connected with us by following *The Colac Aboriginal Gathering Place* on Facebook and Instagram, or by reading our newsletters available on the Wathaurong website under *Publications*.

Finally, we extend our heartfelt thanks to the Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative for their continued partnership and for helping us close the gap. Above all, we thank our community - your kindness, leadership, and spirit guide everything we do.



# Western District ACCO collective



## About the Western District ACCO Collective (WDAC)

*"We work together to give Community a voice to all levels of government and to support each other with one goal - to address, advocate and renegotiate power and resources to better serve our Western Victorian Communities."*

**WDAC are a representative, strategic and relational governance body of eight Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCO).** WDAC came together as a regional governance body in 2023 to formalise the long-standing solidarity and partnership of our Communities and ACCOs.

### Collectively our ACCOs

- Provide holistic wraparound services to 20% of Victoria's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Aboriginal) Community (AIHW 2025)
- Employ 800+ staff, including 500 Aboriginal Community members.
- Bring significant investment into our regional and rural communities and businesses and
- Provide leadership across State and National governance platforms.



*"Our ACCOs and Communities have continuing connection across the Western Region, sharing celebrations, success and practices – holding each other up. Our collective Community spirit and pride are strong"*

### Together we are a strong collective voice for active local and regional self-determination and governance by:

- Holding government and partners to account across regional, state, and national level for our families, Communities and ACCOs.
- Centring our ACCOs' ways of working to lead the solutions that can achieve equity and beyond for our Communities.
- Advocating for ongoing, equitable and flexible funding to deliver our place based ACCOs ways of working with our Communities.
- Supporting Community-led approaches to address the legacy and ongoing harms of colonisation and systemic racism that disproportionately impact Aboriginal Communities.

### WDAC Highlights OF 2024-2025

*"WDAC is our Western Division's self-determination in action, changing the way we do business."*

- **Our WDAC CEOs, as well as our Communities of Practice, meet regularly** to share knowledge and inform our regional planning and advocacy.
- **Yoorrook Justice Commission** highlighted WDAC as an example of best practice in regional governance. WDAC met with the Commissioners, submitted four evidence papers on Housing, Health and Education, and presented Housing evidence to the Commission.
- **WDAC negotiated for Tackling Indigenous Smoking and Vaping positions in every ACCO** in support of regional equity and local knowledge.
- **WDAC led our Regional Data Project, in partnership with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Deakin Rural Health**, including interviewing 200 ACCO Staff to inform our 20 Year Community

Strengthening Plan (see Spotlight below). In October 2025 WDAC will present our regional 20 Year Community Strengthening Plan to both State and Federal Ministers.

• **WDAC are undertaking a Regional Oral Healthcare Feasibility Study**, supported by Victorian Closing the Gap Sector Strengthening funding.

• **WDAC strengthened our partnership with the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria and Treaty Authority.** WDAC enhanced our knowledge of Treaty, Self-determination and Sovereignty in the context of future Treaty opportunities for ACCOs.

• **WDAC strengthened our partnerships with Victorian ACCOs** including Loddon Mallee Aboriginal Reference Group (LMARG), Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, Aboriginal Housing Victoria, Aboriginal Community Elders Service (ACES) and Ngwala Willumbong.

• **WDAC represented our region at Victorian Governance forums** including as VACCHO and NACCHO members, Treaty ACCO Governance Forum, Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young People's Alliance, Ngaweeyan Maar-oo Closing the Gap Partnership forum, Victorian Health and Wellbeing Partnership Forum, Victorian Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Forum, Barwon Health, and Western Victorian Public Health Network (PHN).

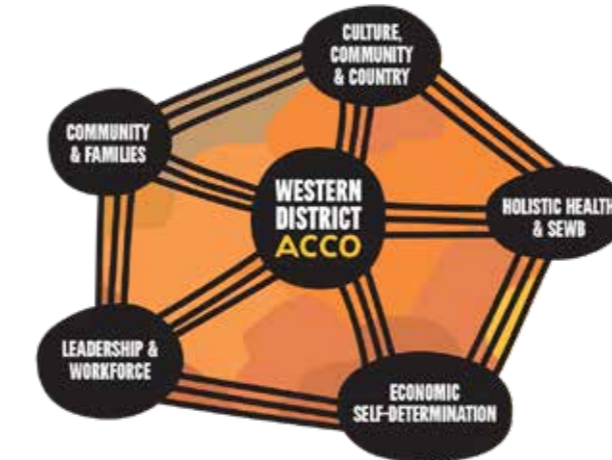
• **WDAC strengthened our relationships with Victorian and Federal governments** including meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles, Victorian Minister Hutchins and Christine Couzens MP (Treaty and First Peoples), Minister Shing and Homes Victoria (Housing and Homelessness), and meet regularly with Victorian Department of Families Fairness and Housing (DFFH) for regional Wungirilwil Gapgapduir governance.

## Spotlight on WDAC's Regional Data Project & 20-year community strengthening plan

Over the last fifty years, our rural and regional ACCOs have grown exponentially from our Elders' kitchen tables to gathering places and integrated services for our Communities that proactively strengthen our

- Deep connections to Culture, Community and Country.
- Families and Community from birth to the Dreaming.
- Communities' holistic health and wellbeing from birth to the Dreaming.
- Economic self-determination for our ACCOs and Communities
- ACCOs' leadership and workforces, now and into the future.

*"Our Communities are growing, with a young median age of 26 years, and our Elders are living longer"*



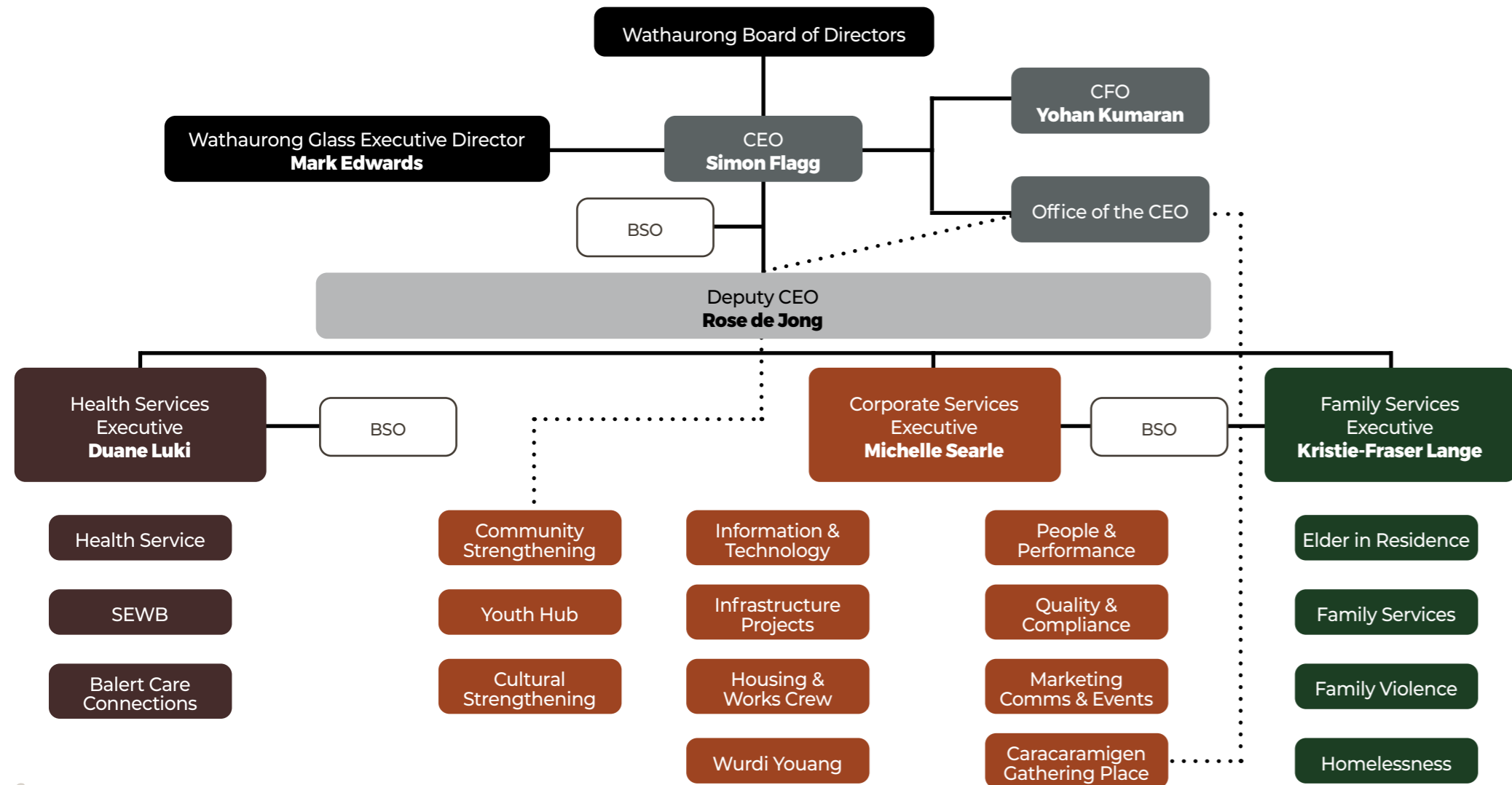
Since 2024, WDAC have led our **REGIONAL DATA PROJECT** in partnership with the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and Deakin Rural Health to develop our evidence base across our ACCOs' areas of practice. WDAC's interviews with 200 ACCO staff led to the development the above and below WDAC Ways of Working and Holistic Wraparound Care models of integrated ACCO services and over 80 ACCO case studies.

The initial WDAC Regional Data Project findings established the need for WDAC to develop our **20 Year Plan for STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITIES OUR WAY**. Driven by local, state, and national data, our Plan focuses on the self-determined needs, priorities, and aspirations of our ACCOs, families and Communities now and into the future.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT [WWW.WDAC.COM.AU](http://WWW.WDAC.COM.AU)**



# ORGANISATIONAL CHART



# Corporate Services Staff

## Corporate Services Team

**Michelle Searle**  
Corporate Services Executive Manager

**Andrea Tournier**  
Business Support Officer

## Operations

**Hayley Couzens**  
OHS Manager

**Nikita Pillai**  
Quality & Compliance Manager

**Jasmine Skye-Marinos**  
Quality & Compliance Officer

**Natalie Sullivan**  
Service Designer MARAM Implementation

**Nikki Caroll**  
Infrastructure Manager

**Ella Devery**  
Fleet Management & Quality Support Officer

## Human Resources

**Tenaya Watts**  
HR Manager

**Josephine Bolitho**  
HR Business Partner & Payroll Officer

**Harathi Vittal**  
Support Officer

## Finance

**Yohan Kumaran**  
Chief Finance Officer

**Cameron Dodds**  
Finance Manager

**Shannon Ryan**  
Finance Business Partner

**Kathy Davis**  
Finance Support Officer

**Diksha Thakur**  
Accounts Officer

**Fiona Ryan**  
Finance Administration Support Officer

**Asmita KC**  
Finance Support Officer

## Housing

**Jack Clark**  
Housing Manager

**Bruce Ryan**  
Building Maintenance Manager

**Leon Acquilina**  
Building Apprentice

**Deegan Searle**  
Works Crew

**Cooper McEwen**  
Works Crew

**David McLachlan**  
Garden Crew

**Noel Hodges**  
Garden Crew

## Marketing & Events

**Beth Davis**  
Marketing & Partnerships Manager

**Rachael Kirtley**  
Events Co-ordinator

## IT Support

**Jack Woolford**  
IT Manager

**Greg Cooper**  
IT Support Officer

**Michael Graham**  
IT Support Officer

## Wurdi Youang

**Reg Abrahams**  
IPA Manager

**Megan Frazer**  
Project Officer

**Jamie Butcher**  
Aboriginal Landcare Officer



# Corporate Services Executive Manager Report

**Michelle Searle**

I am Michelle Searle a proud Awabakal woman, mother of 3 and now grandmother of 1.

I joined Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative in October 2024 as Executive Manager - Corporate Services, and I am incredibly proud to be part of an organisation that places Community, Culture, and Connection at the heart of everything we do. It is a privilege to serve our mob and contribute to the ongoing growth and strength of Wathaurong.

The 2024/2025 year has been one of significant progress and transformation for Corporate Services. Our team

has continued to provide essential support across the organisation, enabling service areas to deliver culturally safe and impactful programs to our community. Key infrastructure milestones include major advancements in the Morgan Street redevelopment, which will bring our staff and services together in one culturally significant location.

We completed the roll out Employment Hero, our new HR and payroll system, and launched the Learning & Development module to streamline mandatory training. The Wathaurong Supervision Framework is

now embedded across teams, and quarterly induction training has re commenced for all new staff.

We welcome all new staff to our team and acknowledge those that has left us and thank them for their commitment to ensuring we are a strong connected organisation.

I am proud of the resilience and commitment shown by our Corporate Services team and look forward to continuing our work to strengthen Wathaurong's foundations and future.

# Corporate Services Report

## People & Performance

At the end of the 2024/2025 financial year, Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative had 222 active staff.

Of those active staff, 43.24% identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander, which is slightly down from last year's percentage of 44.5%.

We recruited 74 new staff members during the 2024/2025 financial year which is up from 62 the previous financial year.

We had 54 staff separations, and we thank them for their service and wish them well.

The 2024/2025 financial year saw several key transitions and achievements within the People & Performance team, reflecting both growth and leadership across the organisation.

Nikita Pillai served as Acting Manager, People & Performance for the majority of the financial year, commencing in the role on 28 November 2022 while continuing to hold her substantive position as Quality Manager. Nikita provided exceptional leadership during this period, and we extend our sincere thanks for her dedication and contribution to the team.

Tenaya Rossi returned from parental leave in May 2025 and transitioned from Team Leader to Manager, People & Performance. This marks a significant milestone for Wathaurong, as Tenaya becomes our first Aboriginal HR Manager.

Josephine Bolitho progressed from Support Officer to Business Partner, People & Performance. In addition to her new role, Josephine played a pivotal part in bringing payroll services back in-house, managing both responsibilities with remarkable efficiency. Her efforts ensured timely and accurate payroll delivery for all staff, and we are deeply grateful for her commitment.

Harathi Vittal started in the position of Support Officer, People and Performance, providing much needed support to our operations.

With the successful integration of Employment Hero and in-house payroll systems during the 2023/2024 financial year, the People & Performance team is now commencing work with the Deputy CEO Rose De Jong to develop Wathaurong's Recruitment and Retention Strategy, an important step in strengthening our workforce sustainability.

We are proud to report zero new workers compensation claims for the year, reflecting our ongoing commitment to a safe and supportive workplace.

In a significant enhancement to staff wellbeing services, Wathaurong partnered with Bila Empower, a First Nations-led not-for-profit organisation, to provide culturally safe Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services. Since the partnership began, we've seen a notable increase in staff engagement with EAP offerings compared to previous providers.

We congratulate following staff members, who reached a milestone of more than 10 years of service with Wathaurong over the 2024/2025 financial year:

- Fiona Ryan
- Kristie Fraser-Lange
- Dr David Corbet
- Ebony Hickey
- Todd Fry



# Corporate Services Report

## Housing

Wathaurong Housing rental properties have been approved to undergo a structural change to better support tenants, introducing new roles of Facilities Manager and Housing Officer. The redefined Housing Officer will coordinate rentals, ensure property standards, and assist renters with their rights and responsibilities. A new platform is being developed to manage rental housing information. We look forward to continued improvements in the coming year.

These enhancements aim to provide tenants with quicker responses to maintenance requests, clearer communication channels, and more personalised support. Training sessions will be offered for both staff and tenants to help them adapt to the updated system and take full advantage of new resources in the coming year.

### 26 Brooks Street project “Wa-Karroong” - meaning “To give house”,

The TPNG build at 26 Brooks Street build has made significant progress over the past year. This project aims to provide sustainable and culturally significant housing solutions for our community. The build is part of our broader commitment to enhancing community infrastructure and supporting the needs of our members.

Our home has a name “Wa-Karroong” - meaning “To give house”,

- **Construction Planning and Contracts:** The construction planning and building contracts have been finalised, with the build scheduled to commence in August 2025. This includes the finalisation of building plans and the selection of a new construction partner after the initial plan to use 3D printing technology did not proceed due to technical failure.

- **Site Preparation:** The site at 26 Brooks Street, Norlane, has been prepped for the commencement of the build. This includes approval from the council for an additional driveway, site cleaning and water tapping, which are set to begin in early August.

- **Media and Promotions:** Media and promotional activities are underway. These efforts aim to draw attention to the project and generate additional donations to reduce Wathaurong’s project costs.

- **Community Engagement:** Conversations are being held with the health team to understand the best options for utilising the home to generate income for the organisation.

## Garden and Building Services

The works crew continues to provide garden and building services, with their main operations now being housed from Booln Booln instead of North Geelong, saving on the rental of an additional shed space. The lawns and gardens team serviced 19 Wathaurong properties and 45 other client sites, while the Building & Works team supports Wathaurong locations, clients, and rental properties. The crew has added two Apprentice

Builder roles and two casual lawn and garden positions, and both teams have begun serving independent clients.



# Corporate Services Report

## Fleet

The 2024/2025 financial year has represented a pivotal phase of growth and transformation for our fleet operations. Our team has continued to play a critical role in supporting staff and service delivery across multiple sites, ensuring that services are delivered in a professional and timely manner.

Throughout the year, we expanded and modernised our fleet with the acquisition of 19 new vehicles. This growth was essential to meet increasing demand for outreach and client services. The new additions comprise a mix of plug-in hybrid and traditional fuel vehicles, reflecting our ongoing commitment to sustainability and operational excellence.

We have continued our fleet rollover strategy, auctioning off older vehicles with the proceeds being reinvested into new acquisitions. This phased approach to fleet turnover supports warranty management and helps optimise long-term fleet performance

A notable achievement this year was the branding and deployment of a dedicated medical van, designed to extend our clinical outreach services within the community. This initiative significantly enhances our capacity to deliver healthcare directly to those who need it most.

In addition, we successfully developed and launched a new in-house fleet management system, *Gobata Ngjtj*, meaning “Take Care of Community”. The platform offers staff streamlined access to manage fleet bookings via a mobile app while providing Fleet personnel with a

purpose-built dashboard to manage daily operations with greater efficiency and oversight.

In summary, the 2024/2025 financial year has been successful for our fleet operations. Through strategic expansion, technological innovation, and continued fleet renewal, we have strengthened our ability to deliver efficient, sustainable, and environmentally responsible services. We remain committed to building on this progress in the years to come.

## Occupational Health & Safety

The OHS department has been dedicated to ensuring a safe and compliant workplace environment throughout the 2024/2025 year. Our efforts have focused on incident management, workplace safety improvements, and ongoing training and audits.

From July 2024 to June 2025, we have seen a total of 26 OHS incidents reported. These incidents have been categorised into various subcategories, including client behaviour, biological hazards, fall hazards, injuries, and occupational violence. Notably, there has been a decrease in incidents related to occupational violence and threats to personal safety compared to the previous year.

- **De-escalation Training:** We provided de-escalation training for appropriate staff, which has been completed successfully. This training is aimed at equipping staff with the skills to handle challenging situations effectively.

- **Infrastructure Enhancements:** Significant improvements have been made to the Albert Street building, including insulation and soundproofing, to enhance the working environment.

- **Audit and Compliance:** Regular internal OHS audits have been conducted to ensure compliance with safety standards. These audits have included site inspections and reviews of safety protocols.

In line with our commitment to enhancing workplace safety, we have successfully implemented the My Safety Buddy app. This app is designed to provide real-time safety monitoring and emergency support for employees working alone, remotely, or in potentially vulnerable situations. The app allows staff to check in during work activities and sends alerts if they do not respond, ensuring help is available when needed.

The following is a breakdown of incidents reported from July 2024 to June 2025:

- **Client Behaviour:** 10 incidents

- **Biological Hazards:** 1 incident

- **Fall Hazards:** 2 incidents

- **Injuries:** 3 incidents

- **Occupational Violence:** 2 incidents.

Moving forward, the OHS department will continue to prioritise workplace safety and compliance. We plan to implement additional training programs, enhance our incident reporting system, and conduct regular audits to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for all staff.

# Corporate Services Report

## Infrastructure

### Morgan Street

The redevelopment of our Morgan Street site will bring Wathaurong staff and community back together in one location that holds cultural significance for the local community. The new building will include a large health services clinic, safe and secure family violence support spaces, child protection outreach and family contact spaces, as well as youth justice, legal and community outreach services areas. In addition, there will be a large 300 capacity conference and hospitality space for Wathaurong to host NAIDOC events, community celebrations and ceremonies, and also to make the space available for hire to external groups to generate ongoing revenue for the organisation.

It will also include a café, as well as co-working, library, programs, podcast/media and other collaborative gathering spaces. In addition, there will be open plan, collaborative staff spaces with a range of meeting rooms and breakout/wellbeing spaces and beautifully landscaped outdoor areas enabling connection to and strengthening of Country, Culture and Community.

The new building has been designed by Woods Bagot architects and we are supported by GHD engineers and Tract landscape architects amongst other well qualified

consultants. We are currently working with Geelong City Council to finalise our town planning application, which includes a planning scheme amendment to rezone land at 60-62 Morgan Street, North Geelong, and part of the land at 43 The Boulevard, Norlane and a planning permit for the construction of the new building. On 27 May 2025, the Council endorsed the planning scheme amendment and issuance of the planning permit and recommended that the Minister for Planning approves both. The planning permit was issued in mid 2025 and we are working through the conditions.

The construction tender documentation has been prepared and we hope to appoint a builder to commence the works in late 2025 and to conclude them in 2027.

### Colac Gathering Place

In August 2024, Wathaurong received feasibility funding under the Aboriginal Community Infrastructure Program to determine the best site in Colac for the Colac Gathering Space. The Colac Aboriginal Community have long advocated for a Community Space where the focus is on the strength, resilience, and beauty of local Aboriginal people's identity beyond just being a place to access services. This determination saw the establishment of the Colac Aboriginal Gathering Place in 2017. We are redeveloping an interim site in Birregurra alongside a team members from the Traditional Owners Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation on Gulidjan Country.

Consultation has been done, and it is a long-term community aspiration to establish a cultural precinct to include a dedicated cultural arts gallery and events space, to provide a year-round opportunity to be immersed and connect through the arts, education and culture, while providing a soft entry point to access and referral to holistic supports and services the local Aboriginal community require.

We are continuing with the feasibility work and hope to have an update for Community soon.

# Corporate Services Report



### Booln Booln

In November 2024, Wathaurong took over Narana Aboriginal Cultural Centre and established Wathaurong Booln Booln Cultural Centre. Booln Booln (pronounced Bool-en Bool-en) in Waddawurrung language means Lyrebird, the speaker of all languages, symbolic of our many mobs, one community coming together. We celebrated this exciting development as this important cultural space is now in the rightful hands of the Aboriginal Community.

Over the past 8 months, Wathaurong has been staging a phased re-opening of Booln Booln for our region. The retail gift store re-opened on Monday 2nd December is open 6 days per week, Monday- Saturday. In June 2024, Troy Benjamin and his wife Cerisa, have brought their signature blend of culture, connection, and country to the Booln Booln Café. The café is nestled within the Booln Booln Cultural Centre and will serve as an extension of the beloved Blak Brews brand.

This remarkable addition perfectly aligns with our commitment to celebrating Indigenous culture and providing exceptional, locally-inspired experiences. Work is continuing on rejuvenating the site, with Wathaurong being committed to putting the right operating model in place, and carrying out some refurbishment works and upkeep to make sure that we can set up culturally appropriate programs that are suitable for a range of different groups.

# Corporate Services Report

## **Albert Street and Mackey Street**

We have been making improvements to the buildings we lease at 10-12 Albert Street, Geelong West and 33 Mackey Street, North Geelong to improve the experience of the building for our community and staff, including increased insulation, sound proofing and updates to our staff workspaces and medical consult rooms. We are investing in these updates to ensure we can continue to provide high quality services to our community, particularly given that in June 2025, we relocated our health services and some of our staff to this location while the new building is being constructed at Morgan Street.

## **Information Technology**

The Information Technology team at Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative has delivered a transformative year of infrastructure upgrades, digital innovation, and cybersecurity enhancements, supporting the organisation's growth and service delivery across all sites and programs.

## **IT Projects and Achievements**

Over the past year, the Co-operative has invested strongly in technology projects that improve services, governance, and staff/community access. These initiatives have focused on making systems more efficient, reducing manual work, and creating new ways for staff and community to connect. From tracking health services and monitoring community commitments, to enabling smoother bookings and

stronger governance processes. The Booln Booln IT fit-out also reflects our commitment to modern facilities, creating spaces for digital storytelling, podcasting, and community connection.

Key achievements include:

- Launch of Wathaurong's custom-built car booking system, replacing Smartfleet. Over **800 bookings** have been made since launch, improving fleet accessibility and reducing costs.
- Deployment of a request-to-recruit system, currently being trialled with Family Services to streamline hiring workflows.
- Creation and launch of websites for Booln Booln Cultural Centre and digital signage.
- Development of a comprehensive marketing database for local schools to support outreach and engagement.
- Continued progress on the Wathaurong Housing System and the Balert Care Medicine App, with prototypes underway.
- A new health promotions database and reporting system enabling better tracking of community attendance.
- An ITC health services tracking system to support coordinated care.
- The Commitment to Action system to monitor and support progress on community and organisational priorities.

- Governance improvements through the Cat Herder system for board, FRAC, and quality compliance processes.
- Completion of the Booln Booln IT fit-out, including a podcast room, digital signage, and A/V facilities for the conferencing centre.
- A homelessness automation referral form providing quicker, more effective support for community members in need.
- Automated password reset notifications reducing helpdesk demand and improving staff access.

## **Infrastructure and Site Transitions**

- Successfully relocated IT infrastructure from Morgan Street to Albert Street, Mackey Street, Youth Hub, GMHBA Stadium Sporthouse, and Booln Booln, ensuring uninterrupted service delivery across all locations.
- Completed network and CCTV upgrades at Booln Booln, including the installation of an 'On Air' light and radio room door for the community podcast room.
- Finalised network infrastructure and internet installation at the Birregurra site for the Colac team.

# Corporate Services Report

## **Networking and CCTV Enhancements**

- Implemented **Ubiquiti networking equipment across all sites**, eliminating subscription costs and enabling a more affordable uplift of network devices and coverage. Compared to alternatives, Ubiquiti's solution proved approximately **75% cheaper** in upfront capital costs (e.g. \$15,000 vs \$70,000), while also consolidating network reporting and troubleshooting into a single-pane-of-glass admin portal.
- New sites and implementations are now adopting **Ubiquiti CCTV solutions**, reducing costs and improving incident identification through inbuilt local AI features.

## **Cybersecurity and Governance**

- Wathaurong's **Microsoft Secure Score reached 80.74%**, reflecting ongoing improvements through enhanced security policies such as stricter multifactor authentication and anti-phishing measures.
- Data governance processes are under review to ensure systems are robust and aligned with best practice.
- The ICT Policy remains under review, with a complementary AI Policy nearing completion.

## **Hardware and Endpoint Management**

- **263 out of 291 staff devices** have been upgraded to Windows 11, with remaining devices either pending installation or in remediation. No business disruption has been reported.
- Azure Virtual Desktop session hosts were upgraded to Windows 11 Multi-User Session, improving performance and compatibility.
- Transitioned to new FujiFilm printers, replacing the previous provider. This change is expected to save approximately \$120,000 over five years.
- Upgraded infrastructure across Azure from Windows Server 2019 to Windows Server 2022, ensuring continued security and support.

## **Mobile Services Optimisation**

- Transitioned to **Telstra VTS pricing** for mobile services, reducing the monthly bill from a peak of **\$11,291.96 to \$8,189**, despite a significant increase in the number of services due to expanded staffing and service delivery.

## **Service Delivery**

- The IT team managed **1,507 support tickets** throughout the financial year, with **1,315 successfully resolved**, ensuring responsive and reliable support across the organisation.

## **Quality & Compliance**

The Quality team manages Wathaurong's Quality Management System (QMS), which monitors:

- Accreditation
- Funding compliances and reporting
- Document Register including Policies and Procedures
- Internal reporting such as Incidents, Feedback, Audits, Risks, and Improvements.

The Quality team has been strengthening processes for reporting Incidents, Feedback and Complaints. Our team has been assisting managers to provide timely response to complaints and incidents. Quality data relating to Incidents, Feedback, Audit and Improvements is provided to the Governance committees to monitor, analyse, and implement improvements, providing a safe workplace for staff and community.

The Board has endorsed a new Risk Framework for Wathaurong which the Quality team is developing and implementing. The Risk framework will bring consistency, visibility and accountability to how Wathaurong manages risks to protect staff and Community.

We welcome Natalie Sullivan to the MARAM implementation role. A key focus of this role is developing guidelines and procedures for information sharing, mapping MARAM responsibilities across the organisation, and identifying training opportunities for staff to increase knowledge and confidence to identify, assess and respond to family violence.

# Corporate Services Report

During 2024 - 2025 Wathaurong has successfully completed the following Accreditations:

- National Standards for Mental Health Services (NSMHS) Mid-Term Assessment

The Auditors highlighted the great work Wathaurong has achieved including:

- The commitment to the provision of culturally safe and accessible services for Community.
- The Social and Emotional Wellbeing program aligns with the Social and Emotional Wellbeing Framework which reflects a holistic perspective of health.
- Wathaurong's Quality Management System Logiqc is being well utilised across many areas of the organisation. The auditor commented this is one of the best utilisations of Logiqc she has seen.

Some of the feedback provided by Community members include:

*"I have been provided with a lens to see the world differently and what is in and outside of my control"*

*"They listen and hear and if they can't help, they will find people who can"*

*"My worker is friendly and genuine, and it feels like a non-judgemental space"*

*"I am really appreciative for what they do and how they bring community together"*

*"The personal approach I get and support for me to be my best self"*

*"I am grateful for the cultural lens and how this is reflected in support."*

We would like to thank all staff and community that participated and provided feedback through each Accreditation.

## Wurdi Youang

After more than three decades of dedicated service, Uncle Trevor (Reg) Abrahams has recently retired from full-time work at Wathaurong. Over the years he has contributed through roles in cultural heritage education and protection, archaeological monitoring of government and business developments, and as a Board member. More recently, Uncle Reg became best known for his leadership in grassland conservation and in developing native seed restoration and production at Wurdi Youang. His contributions have been integral to Wathaurong and Wurdi Youang, and he will be greatly missed by his colleagues and by the many environmental networks he helped build.

This year, Wurdi Youang has continued to strengthen its role as a place of conservation, culture and community connection. Highlights from the year include:

- **Existing Native Grass Restoration Projects:** consistent focus on the main Kangaroo grass patch has allowed it to thrive, while other native grass areas are gaining momentum and are a priority moving forward.
- **Grasslands Revitalisation Project at Waterways:** focusing on restoring seasonal herbaceous wetlands near waterways. By re-establishing native grasses and plants in these small wetlands, the

project is improving soil health, water retention and biodiversity, while creating new habitats for endangered species. Funded under Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), the Green Links initiative provides a strong model for expanding ecological restoration at Wurdi Youang.

- **Tiger Pear Pilot Project:** commenced this year, paving the way for a larger initiative to be led by Melbourne Water across Wathaurong and neighbouring properties. Tiger Pear, a spiny cactus introduced by colonists, is a serious weed that threatens people, wildlife and Country if not controlled and hopefully eradicated.

- **Caring for Country Program:** delivered in partnership between the Wurdi Youang, Youth Hub and Community Strengthening teams. Funded by the Department of Justice and Community Services, the program supports young people within the eligibility criteria to pursue positive pathways in life by strengthening cultural identity under the guidance of Elders and respected Community members, while building knowledge, skills and experience in Landcare.

- **Accessible Toilets:** visitors to Wurdi Youang now have access to a permanent, wheelchair-accessible toilet block behind the main shed. Installed by Wathaurong's maintenance team, led by Bruce Ryan, with funding support from the National Aboriginal Australians Agency (NIAA), this facility makes Wurdi Youang a more inclusive space for all.

# Corporate Services Report

**Team Growth:** In addition to Uncle Reg's departure, this year has brought further developments within the Wurdi Youang team. Michelle Searle joined at the Executive level, taking responsibility for overseeing operational activities. Jamie Butcher has maintained his landcare duties while transitioning into a program leadership position following several years of mentorship from Uncle Reg. Megan Frazer continues to provide valuable support across both projects and administrative functions. The organisation remains committed to team expansion where possible, and the outlook for Wurdi Youang is highly promising.

## Marketing, Communications & Events

Wathaurong hosted another huge number of community events and activities across the 2024/25 year. In July 2024, we said goodbye to Layla Boseley, and in October 2024 we welcomed Rachael Kirtley as our new Events Coordinator.

We kicked off the year as always in July 2024 with the deadly celebrations of NAIDOC Week, and our biggest NAIDOC Ball ever - 450 people attended The Pier to celebrate with us and party on til midnight!

We once again hosted the statewide VACSAL Senior Football & Netball Carnival in October 2024, this time the event was held in Portarlington. More than 3500 enjoyed the weekend in our region, and despite the rainy weather we saw families enjoy themselves with the entertainment and activations on offer.

November saw a very special event being held at Wurdi Youang - The Ceremony of Cultural Rings, designed by Uncle Glenn Shea. This was a full day ceremony on Country that comprised many traditional as well as contemporary elements and practices. It began with a sunrise ceremony for mob only, followed by cultural workshops throughout the day. Allies were welcome to the sunset event to observe and celebrate the Ceremony of Cultural rings, which included a feed of roo stew. Throughout the ceremony, Knowledge Keepers and Fire Keepers shared cultural knowledge, history and traditions.

We also hosted our first Community Christmas Party at the Booln Booln Cultural Centre in December 2024, before it was re-opened to the general public. This gave the community an opportunity to return to the space and celebrate it being back in Aboriginal hands.

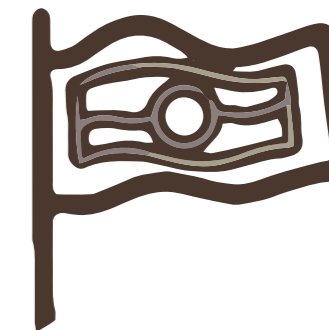
The "It's A Mob Thing" health music festival returned to Wadda Wurrung country this year, with the event also being held at Booln Booln Cultural Centre in March 2025. It was a great day out with over 400 people registering their attendance.

The grand opening of Booln Booln happened on Monday 31st March 2025 with a Smoking Ceremony and was great to see such a great crowd come out and support the re-opening.

We also hosted a Geelong Chamber of Commerce event in April at Booln Booln, to showcase the space to the business community, and to soft launch our fundraising efforts for the Morgan Street redevelopment project.

April also saw us host the first of what we hope will become an annual "Open Day." We held this event at the Norlane ARC, and it was an opportunity to showcase all of the different programs and services that we offer at Wathaurong. Not only did it give the community a chance to come in and chat with us to learn more about how they can engage with wraparound services, but it also gave an opportunity for the wider Geelong community to attend and learn about Wathaurong and how we support mob. We had a number of local businesses pop in to learn more and see how they can partner with Wathaurong to better support mob also.

In September 2024 we also engaged local digital marketing company, Pixeld, who have been helping us to grow our digital social media information, sharing videos, stories and culture through our social media and our digital newsletter. Since working with Pixeld, we have seen huge growth in our social media engagement and promotion of our services to the community.



# COMMUNITY EVENT NUMBERS

## 2024 / 2025

- 400**  
Wathaurong NAIDOC Ball (6/7/24)
- 600**  
NAIDOC Week Flag Raising (8/7/24)
- 30**  
NAIDOC Week Aunties & Uncles Lunch (9/7/24)
- 30**  
NAIDOC Youth Ball (10/7/24)
- 100**  
NAIDOC Kids Disco (11/7/24)
- 40**  
Naarm March (12/7/24)
- 100**  
Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Children's Day (5/8/24)
- 60+**  
September School Holiday Program (24/9/2024 - 4/10/2024)
- 300+**  
Geelong Aboriginal Employment Expo (11/10/24)
- 3500**  
VACSAL Football Netball Carnival (5/10/24 - 6/10/24)
- 150**  
Ceremony of Cultural Rings (15/11/24)
- 100**  
Wathaurong AGM (29/11/24)
- 50+**  
Kindergarten Graduation (11/12/24)
- 200**  
Community Christmas Party (15/12/24)
- 60**  
Ready for Learning Day (21/1/25)
- 60+**  
January School Holiday Program (20/12/2024 - 29/1/2025)
- 60**  
Pako Festa (22/2/25)



- 56**  
VACSAL Basketball Carnival (7/3/25)
- 50**  
International Womens Day Staff Event (11/3/25)
- 400+**  
It's a Mob Thing Health Music Festival (15/3/25)
- 300 - 500**  
Wathaurong Open Day (7/4/25)
- 60+**  
April school holiday program (9/4/25)
- 100**  
Boon Boon Geelong Chamber of Commerce Event (14/4/25)
- 40**  
Community Meeting (7/5/25)
- 50**  
GP Registrar Day (9/5/25)
- 300**  
Belmont Lions Reconciliation Round (17/5/25)
- 300 - 500**  
Rec In The Park (25/5/25)
- 150**  
National Sorry Day (26/5/25)
- 30**  
Community Meeting (2/6/25)



# NAIDOC Week

The 2024 NAIDOC week events held from 6th July through to 14th July saw more than 2000 people attending a range of events, kicking off with the annual NAIDOC Ball which was held at The Pier Geelong for the second year in a row. We managed to fit in even more people again this year, with 450 people in attendance! The Flag Raising event was held at Morgan Street on Monday 8th July, where the Wathaurong Community NAIDOC Awards were presented. The Elders lunch, Youth Ball and Kids Disco all made a return in 2024 and were very well received by all who attended.

## NAIDOC WINNERS - 2024

### Moordeemoondeek Goopma (Young Female Achiever)

#### WINNER: Yalanda Neal-Edwards

Yalanda Neal Edwards was nominated for her staunch and fearless approach to social justice and human rights issues. She's not afraid to stand up for what is right and just and doesn't mind standing alone if that's what a situation requires. Through her role at the Koorie Youth Council Yalanda has provided significant contributions to statewide forums, local justice and family violence area sector meetings. Her passion for sharing culture, addressing racism and integrity in her art practice are those of great leadership qualities.

### Koolay Goopma (Young Male Achiever)

#### WINNER: Isaiah Harrison

Isaiah Harrison was nominated for being a positive young man open to learning by taking up a new role with Wathaurong and thriving. Isaiah takes every

opportunity to learn and is growing in his role, culture and Community. In 2023, Isaiah was completing Year 12 while mentoring young Aboriginal youth starting their journey in Year 7 and transitioning into high school. In 2024 he applied for and was successful in getting a role with the Out of Home Care team at Wathaurong, where he continues to support Aboriginal youth to create goals and work towards achieving them.

### Nedok Yoongga (Elder/Respected Person)

#### JOINT WINNERS: Richard Fry & Lisa Couzens

Richard Fry was nominated for always being there for community and going beyond. He has spent many years in education advocating for all that don't have a voice in the education space. Uncle Richards shares his loving spirit and takes an interest in the lives of the people he's yarning with. Uncles Richard has been embracing MC roles in community which he holds with great integrity, speaking so passionately about mob, family, friends and community.

Lisa Couzens was nominated for her dedications to sharing culture with community, in particular her work over the past year in our community possum skin cloak workshops. Aunty Lisa shares her knowledge and gave so much of her time and skill to help create the new possum skins for our Board Members that will be passed from Board Member to Board Member in a new cultural tradition for our organisation.

### Ngarrwa Ngitj (Community Person)

#### WINNER: Jurrawaa Stanley

Jurrawaa Stanley was nominated for all of his incredible work in our community. Our deadly warrior brother was always committed to being there for community, and his entire lifetime of work was built around strengthening mob.



# Family Services Staff

## Family Services Management

**Kristie Fraser-Lange**  
Executive Manager, Family Services

**Tahlia Easton**  
Out of Home Care Manager

**Naomi Edwards**  
Family Services and Early Years Manager

**Elyssia Graham**  
Family Services Practice Leader

**Jane Clements**  
Family Services Team Leader

**Djimpi Hood**  
Family Services Team Leader

**Tahlia Dempsey**  
Early Years Team Leader

**Nicole Smith**  
OoHC Team Leader

**Karen Anderson**  
Acting Homelessness Manager

**Ben Atkinson**  
Homelessness Team Leader

**Ruby Bennett**  
Family Violence Manager

**Karen Scanlon**  
Family Violence Team Leader

**Naomi Surtees**  
Elder in Residence

**Taige Crossman**  
Mackey Street Receptionist

## Family Services Team

**Kristen Holmes**  
Senior Family Services Case Worker

**Hannah Wentworth**  
Senior Family Services Case Worker

**Rebecca Smallwood**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Donna Potts**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Alicia Gregory**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Giorgia Hinkley**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Ngara McEwen**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Aimee Scott**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Jo Harris**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Cait Wagner**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Danielle Riddett**  
Family Services Case Worker

## Out of Home Care Team

**Andrew Vella**  
Senior Cultural Advisor  
AFLDM and CSP

**Leilani White**  
Foster Care Recruitment

**Esther Bahatie**  
OoHC Case Manager

**Broide Murray**  
OoHC Case Manager

**Junior Faumuina**  
Better Futures Youth Development  
Coach

**Jana Fosita**  
Better Futures Youth Development  
Coach

## Early Years Team

**Bri Apma Hayes**  
Playgroup Facilitator

**Erin Charles**  
Playgroup Support Worker

**Shannon Moulton**  
Senior Koorie Families as First Educators  
Practitioner

**Gina Chapman**  
Koorie Families as First Educators  
Practitioner

**Jackie Brown**  
Koorie Families as First Educators  
Practitioner

**Hayley Bohem**  
Koorie Pre School Advisor & Best Start  
Facilitator

**Alicia Gregory**  
Koorie Pre School Advisor & Best Start  
Facilitator

**Chantelle Chant**  
Best Start Facilitator

## Family Violence Team

**Mark Thompson**  
Senior Mens Family Violence Worker

**Rory Charles**  
Aboriginal Hub Practitioner

**Olivia Mathieson**  
Youth Justice Worker

**Violet Perason**  
Aboriginal Hub Practitioner

**Robyn Del Rio**  
Aboriginal Response Practice Leader

## Homelessness Team

**Karen Anderson**  
Acting Homelessness Manager

**Ben Atkinson**  
Team Leader

**Georgina Pilkington**  
Initial Assessment and Planning

**Rachael Cater**  
Initial Assessment & Planning

**Ebony Holub**  
Initial Assessment & Planning /  
Aboriginal Private Rental Program Plus

**Carolyn Bean**  
Aboriginal Homes First program

**Ashleigh Costa**  
Intensive Case Management - Housing  
First

**Rachel Oxford**  
Aboriginal Tenants At Risk

**Also acknowledging the work of  
Family Services Team Members who  
have moved on from their role in  
Family Services:**

**Tammy Lovett**  
Out of Home Care Team Leader

**Isaiah Harrison**  
Better Futures and Home Stretch

**Kyly Davies**  
Out of Home Care Worker

**PJ Graham**  
Out of Home Care Worker

**Stephanie McLachlan**  
Senior Cultural Advisor  
AFLDM and CSP

**Megan Verhoeven**  
Foster Care Recruitment

**Vaughan Gray**  
Youth Justice Worker

**Paul Pitts**  
Cultural Support Planner

**Olivia Lund**  
Family Services Team leader

**Joniemaree Marty**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Maya Saunders**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Christine Onesmo**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Ebony Carmagnola**  
Family Services Case Worker

**Fiona Schlenso**  
Homelessness Manager

**Bayudin Basarudin**  
Aboriginal Private Rental Program Plus

**Justine McCarthy**  
Community Support Officer / Aboriginal  
Private Rental Broker

**April Angus**  
Initial Assessment & Planning Worker

# FAMILY SERVICES EXECUTIVE MANAGER REPORT



**Kristie Fraser-Lange**

## Family Services Management

The Family Services leadership team extend gratitude to the entire family services team for their unwavering dedication to supporting the community. Our team delivers 30 programs aimed at fostering connection, safety, stability, and development for children, young people, and families. We adopt a holistic approach, addressing external issues such as health, housing, isolation, financial difficulties, relationship conflicts, substance use, and disabilities that may hinder families from reaching their full potential. By building on the strengths of the families we walk alongside, we

empower them with the skills and abilities to create lasting change.

As we prepare to transition out of Morgan Street, our Early Years team has been diligently planning the next steps. An interim plan has been developed, utilising KKYH and the community hub in Whittington. In collaboration with the Department of Education, we are exploring ways to expand Early Years education by building and delivering both kindergarten and daycare services in addition to our existing playgroups.

At the end of this year, we received confirmation of a three-year refund for our Homelessness Entry Point,

along with a significant increase in funding for our housing and homelessness team. This will enable us to better support community members experiencing homelessness and those at risk of losing their tenancies. Over the next 12 months, our Family Services team is committed to further implementing the Commitment to Action at the team level, continuously improving our practices and support to the community. We aim to challenge ourselves to ensure the community receives the best possible support by celebrating our successes and learning from our shortcomings.



# Family Services Report

## Family Services

### **Integrated Family Services (IFS) and Family Preservation and Reunification (FPR)**

Our IFS and FPR programs support families with children aged between 0-18 years old where parents, carers and/or families may need some extra support to achieve their goals. With the IFS program, the need for support can be identified by individuals themselves, or there may be a referral from another agency, organisation or Child Protection. The aim of the program is to help improve the safety, stability and development of children as well as building self determination by empowering our community and ensuring their voices are at the centre of everything we do. With the FPR program, the referrals come directly from Child Protection.

Wathaurong Family services focus on family centred practice and allowing our community members to decide what supports they require. Our programs can work closely with Child Protection to advocate strongly in decision-making processes, ensuring that services are culturally appropriate and emphasising that culture is a protective factor. Further, ensuring that everything is in the best interest of the children, and that we are supporting families to reach the best possible outcomes. Wathaurong Family services have always identified a gap with our youth needing intensive one on one support, therefore we are fortunate enough to be able to deliver support to a small number of youth targets where we work intensively with young people in navigating changes in their lives and linking them in with key supports such as mental health services, AOD, cultural connections and many more.

Over the course of the year our team has supported over 44 Families within the FPR program and over 89 Families in the IFS program. In this financial year also, we have managed to support 7 Youth with individual case management support.

Wathaurong Family services have seen some fantastic outcomes over the span of the year, from successful reunification of children to their parents, to placement prevention work that successfully kept children at home and saw Child protection close with no further involvement.



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## Out of Home Care

### **Aboriginal Family Lead Decision Making (AFLDM) and Cultural Support Planning**

Aboriginal Family-Led Decision Making (AFLDM) meetings are culturally grounded processes that empower Aboriginal families to have a central voice in decisions about the care and wellbeing of their children, particularly in child protection or out-of-home care contexts. These meetings are led by Aboriginal facilitators and guided by cultural values, ensuring that decisions are made in collaboration with extended family, Elders, and community members. AFLDM respects cultural kinship systems and promotes self-determination, making it a culturally appropriate and community-led alternative to mainstream decision-making models. Throughout the financial year Wathaurong facilitated 41 AFLDMs.

A Cultural Support Plan (CSP) is a vital document developed for all Aboriginal children in out of home care. It outlines how the child will remain connected to their culture, identity, Country, and community. Developed in partnership with the child, their family, and community representatives, the CSP includes cultural activities, language learning, connections with Elders, and participation in community events, ensuring the child's cultural rights are upheld while supporting a strong sense of belonging and identity.

Throughout this year Wathaurong have been an active member of a statewide group of ACCOs reviewing the CSP process which should be implemented in the next year. Wathaurong are really excited for the new process to be implemented as it will give more authority to the ACCOs ensuring that the cultural authority sits where it always should have. Within this year our team supported the endorsement of 47 CSPs.



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### **Better Futures**

The Wathaurong Better Futures program is a voluntary support program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people aged 15 years and 9 months to 21 years, walking with them as they transition from out of home care into independence. Grounded in the belief that culture is care, the program empowers young people to set their own goals and have a strong voice in shaping their future.

Over the past 12 months, Better Futures has proudly supported young people to achieve meaningful milestones, including:

# Family Services Report

- Secured housing for 14 young people
- 3 supported to return to Country
- 16 gaining their learner's permits
- 7 enrolling in training courses
- 4 continuing in mainstream schooling
- 4 gaining employment
- 2 housing-first clients successfully supported into independence

Behind these numbers are powerful stories of growth: young people reconnecting with their children, finding employment through apprenticeships, thriving through cultural camps and art programs, and building confidence in their independence and cultural identity.

Looking ahead, Better Futures is committed to expanding opportunities and deepening cultural support. Our vision includes the development of a Cultural Identity Map guided by Elders, the creation of more group activities such as cultural dance and cooking programs, and stronger partnerships with real estate agents, employers, and apprenticeship providers. Better Futures will continue to value and support all young people, whether in the community or incarcerated, ensuring they feel culturally strong, connected, and ready to thrive in their next chapter.

### **Kinship Care and Home Based Care (Foster Care)**

The Kinship and Foster Care programs are responsible for the case management of Aboriginal children under child protection orders who are placed in kinship care or with foster carers. Our goal is to provide comprehensive support to the children, young people, and their carers by fostering and preserving cultural identity and

connection to the Wathaurong community, while also ensuring ongoing relationships with immediate family members and addressing practical day-to-day needs. These programs play a critical role in maintaining stable placements for children in out-of-home care.

Our team conducts regular home visits, coordinates and supervises family access visits, and organises educational and training sessions to equip carers with the necessary skills to meet the needs of the children and young people in their care. We also ensure the safety and well-being of children within their placements, promote and facilitate their participation in community and cultural events, and provide support during the transition process for young people leaving care. While we work in close collaboration with Child Protection, Wathaurong serves as the primary agency, taking the lead as the contracted provider.

Within Kinship our team also delivers the First Supports program which provides initial placement establishment and support when a child first enters a kinship placement. Through this our team has supported 79 households with placement support and Part B assessments, which is 52 more than what our KPI is. In addition we contracted a total of 43 children and young people in Kinship Care and supported 7 children and young people with both long term Foster Care placements, but also with short respite placements.

### **Foster Care Recruitment Rebranding and Renewed Focus:**

As part of our commitment to excellence, we've recently undertaken a rebranding of our foster care program to better reflect the values and support systems we provide. This rebrand isn't just about a new logo or look,

it's about refining how we communicate our vision, the importance of fostering, and the deep cultural connection to our community. We want to ensure our foster care program resonates not just with carers, but with everyone who comes into contact with it. This rebrand reflects a stronger, more unified message that fosters a sense of pride and ownership among our carers, the community, and the children and young people in care.

### **Recognising Our Existing Carers:**

It's important to acknowledge the incredible work of our 4 current carers. One of these carers, have also taken on the care of an additional child. These carers provide such humbling dedication and resilience in providing safe, loving, and culturally safe environments for children and young people. Without our carers, the program wouldn't be where it is today. We want to express our deepest gratitude for their ongoing efforts, their flexibility, and their commitment to making a difference.

### **Increased Interest Following Open Day:**

One of the most exciting outcomes we've seen recently is the growing interest in our foster care program following our Open Day event. It's clear that the community is responding to our message, and more people are stepping forward to find out how they can contribute. The event brought together not only prospective carers but also people who may not have considered fostering before. The goal is to continue to stimulate interest in the broader community, raise awareness, and continue to support foster carers.



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# Family Services Report

## Early Years

### Aboriginal Best Start Program Mingo Waloom

The Mingo Waloom Aboriginal Best Start program aims to improve the health, development, learning and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in the Wathaurong community from birth to transition to school.



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Mingo Waloom Aboriginal Best Start brings professionals together as part of a partnership to work towards outcomes within the Best Start Logic Model that focus on children's learning and development. Partners work collaboratively using the improvement science approach to address barriers to participation for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children.

Our partnership continues to flourish, with a growing number of committed organisations joining to support our community. Quarterly partnership meetings now attract between 25 to 30 partners, a testament to the collective dedication across the region. This growth reflects a shared vision and deepening commitment to creating meaningful outcomes for children and families.



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We're proud to share that Mingo Waloom Aboriginal Best Start was invited to present at the VACSAL Aboriginal Best Start Forum in June 2025, showcasing

Best Practice: The Wathaurong Way. This statewide recognition highlights the strength of our approach and the impact of culturally grounded, community-led initiatives. It's an honour to be acknowledged at this level, and a moment of pride for our entire team.

During the year, we have been working on eight change ideas, including the development of a Cultural Reflection Tool in collaboration with the KESO team and the Early Childhood Improvement Branch (ECIB) within the Department of Education. The checklist is designed to deepen cultural responsiveness and enhance early childhood outcomes.

The Best Start program is all about bringing people together, listening to our community, and making real change happen. With more partners jumping on board, we're building strength, inclusivity, and bettering local opportunities for our children and families in our community.



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### Bupup Balak Wayipungang Koori Pre-school Advisor Program (KPSA)

The Bupup Balak Wayipungang initiative, also known as Koorie Preschool Advisory (KPSA) Initiative supports better outcomes for children from birth to transition to school within our Wathaurong community.

It does this by:

- supporting Koorie children and families to access and be involved in their local kindergartens
- promoting inclusion and cultural safety in kindergartens

- supporting kindergarten services and programs to include Aboriginal perspectives in their practice and curriculum

During the financial year, Wathaurong's bupup balak wayipungang initiative celebrated many successes including the planning and facilitation of a Kindergarten graduation in December, 2024 for Wathaurong community children transitioning from kindergarten to primary school. The celebration was hosted at Karroong Kanyool - Wathaurong's Youth Hub and saw 23 children attend and graduate on the evening.

In January 2025, we continued the celebration with a Ready for Learning Day, where we had 60 people attend the day, inclusive of children transitioning into kindergarten and school and their siblings, caregivers and extended family members. It was a fabulous day with great feedback from the community.

Support has been provided to over 100 Early Childhood services through attendance at team meetings, attending group sessions with children, co-facilitating Barwon Early Learning yarns for kindergarten services in the Barwon area in collaboration with the Koorie Engagement Support Officer (KESO) team and the Early Childhood Improvement Branch (ECIB) team from the Department of Education.

The program has also supported 85 children and their families directly through working in collaboration with their kindergartens and in some instances, supporting families with the enrolment process into kindergarten programs.



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# Family Services Report

## Milla Milla and Kitjarra Booboop Playgroups

Milla Milla Playgroup is a warm, culturally safe space where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and their parents, caregivers, grandparents, and extended family can come together, connect, and grow.



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We know that kids thrive through play and social interaction, so having a space where they can build strong cultural identity through songs, stories, play, and other cultural activities is something we're really proud of.

Playgroup is a great way for families to meet, share, and support each other. Being part of playgroup gives our little ones that sense of belonging and connection to community. It helps them grow up Strong, Proud, and Deadly—and gives adults a chance to build relationships and form connections too.

Kitjarra Booboop is our baby playgroup designed especially for children aged 0-12 months. It's a welcoming, culturally safe space where all parents and carers can come together, relax, and yarn about all the things their little booboop (babies) are doing. This space was created to help families feel comfortable and supported during those early months of parenting. It's a laid-back environment where everyone feels free to share, connect, and learn from one another.

We use our 'Wathaurong Playgroup' Facebook page to keep families in the loop with community events, resources, and updates regularly. Our Facebook group has grown to 250 members.

As part of Wathaurong's infrastructure upgrades, our playgroups have temporarily moved to new locations across the area, making sure we still have welcoming spaces for children and families to come together and stay connected. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, you will find us at Karroong Kanyool - Wathaurong's Youth Hub and on Fridays we're at The Whittington Early Learning and Family Centre on Apollo Place.

Over the past year, we've welcomed 39 children into our Wathaurong playgroups - a beautiful reflection of the trust families put in our spaces and the strong sense of community we continue to build. Each child brings their own energy, curiosity, and culture. It's so deadly to watch our community children grow, learn, and connect through play.

## Balert Gerrbik: Koorie Families as First Educators (KFFE)

Balert Gerrbik supports families within our community to provide a strong foundation for their children's early learning and development through high-quality, culturally safe, evidence-based parenting support.



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Family Educators work alongside parents and caregivers in nurturing the skills and confidence needed to guide their children's early learning and development. The initiative empowers parents and caregivers by expanding their knowledge and skills, helping them create nurturing environments where children can learn.

Children thrive physically, emotionally, and culturally when supported by strong family and community connections. This foundation helps them grow up confident, resilient, and strong in their identity.

Families lead the way in every aspect of the program. They choose how and where they participate, and they set the goals that matter most to them.

Family Educators are trained in various Evidence Based support programs inclusive of the Triple P (Positive Parenting Program) for mob, Smalltalk, and Circle of Security Parenting (COSP) Program. The team uses these programs to support families in ways that feel culturally safe and comfortable - whether it's through one-on-one yarns or group sessions. Over the past year, the KFFE program has worked directly with 62 families, offering tailored support through both individual and group-based approaches. These connections have helped strengthen relationships, build confidence, and create a space where families feel seen, heard, and supported.



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# Family Services Report

## Family Violence

### Holistic Family Violence Case Management

Over the past twelve months, the Holistic Family Violence Program has directly supported 23 women and reached 22 children affected by family violence. With the guidance of our case managers, many families have safely exited family violence relationships and begun rebuilding their lives with strength, dignity, and resilience. Several women and their children have also secured safe and stable housing after experiencing homelessness due to fleeing from family violence.

Beyond individual outcomes, the program has actively fostered systems-level collaboration to enhance safety and wellbeing across the community. By working in partnership with housing services, legal aid, child protection, mental health providers, and law enforcement, we hope to strengthen the safety net around those that have experienced family violence and create a more responsive pathways to healing and recovery.

### Therapeutic Family Violence Program

In early 2025, Wathaurong proudly launched its Therapeutic Family Violence Program—a program dedicated to supporting women and children within our community who have experienced family violence.

At its heart, the Therapeutic Family Violence Program seeks to walk alongside community members on their journey toward recovery and inner healing. Through culturally informed and trauma-aware therapeutic support, the program empowers women and children to reclaim their stories, strengthen emotional resilience, and rebuild meaningful connections with themselves

and others. It is about restoring dignity, fostering hope, and creating pathways to healing.

The program offers a safe and welcoming space where participants are invited to engage in therapeutic modalities that encourage expression, reflection, and growth. Whether through art, storytelling, yarning, or other therapeutic practices, each session is tailored to meet the unique needs of the individual, honouring their lived experience and cultural identity.

To date, the program has been delivered in a one-on-one format, allowing for personalised and focused support. However, Wathaurong envisions expanding the program to include therapeutic group sessions in the near future. These group settings will offer an opportunity for community members to come together, share their experiences, and heal collectively strengthening bonds and fostering a sense of solidarity and belonging.

Since its inception, the program has already made a meaningful impact, providing therapeutic support to 14 community members. This is just the beginning. As the program continues to grow, Wathaurong remains committed to walking beside our women and children, ensuring they are seen, heard, and supported every step of the way.

### Men's Family Violence Case Management

The Men's Family Violence Case Management continued to provide support to Men in community who are using family violence or at risk of using family violence. Throughout the year, the program supported 24



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community members in their journey towards choosing safer and healthier behaviours towards their loved ones and creating meaningful change for themselves. Our men's case manager has also attended and support the Dardi Munwurro program supporting community members to engage and feel comfortable with making the courageous step.

To support this journey, the program has also facilitated many referrals ensuring wrap around and holistic support is being provided. The program has successfully completed the following referrals:

- 10 to Dardi Munwurro (Men's Healing and Behaviour Change)
- 2 to Dardi Munwurro Ngarra Jarranounith Place (Residential Program)
- 10 to Alcohol and Other Drug services
- 6 to Wathaurong Social Emotional Wellbeing
- 6 to Wathaurong Health Services
- 3 to NDIS
- 5 to Men's Group
- 13 to the Work Development Permit (WDP) Scheme
- 3 to Wulgunngo Ngalu Learning Place
- 5 to Wathaurong Homelessness Intake
- 4 to Wathaurong Koori Families as First Educators

# Family Services Report

## Orange Door

The Orange Door - Aboriginal Response Team (ART) has played an important role in supporting community to begin their journey in seeking support around family violence and child well-being. In the past 12 months, Wathaurong received an uplift to add an additional two hub practitioners. When all positions are filled, we are hopeful that this will lead to increased capacity and availability to community who would like to engage with the team via The Orange Door.

Over the past 12 months, we have seen a notable increase in community actively engaging with The Orange Door and expressing a preference for the Aboriginal Response Team. The team have also received feedback that highlights the impact their support has on individual's journeys and the continual trust being built.

*"Thankyou.....everything you have done and the support you have shown me has been greatly appreciated."*

*"I am so very grateful for anything I get, bet especially for all the help and work you have done to support me and my children."*

*"After the referral to Orange Door, you were the first person to help me and everything turned around when I started working with Wathaurong and I got my kids back."*

Often as the first point of contact following an incident or experience of family violence, it is crucial that a culturally respectful and collaborative approach is offered to ensure the community member is empowered, feels safe and supported.

Providing this response has, at times, been the difference

between individuals engaging in services immediately and long-term. Where this is particularly highlighted is where the ART are able to build rapport with community members and further refer to Wathaurong programs (i.e. Holistic Family Violence Case Management), facilitating a warm handover and allowing time for trust to be built. This approach also reducing the need for community members to retell their stories and minimises the risk of further psychological harm.

We would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of Ebony Hickey, who stepped in and supported the wider Orange Door network by delivering Strengthening Cultural Safety in The Orange Door training for 85 staff working across the Barwon Region.

Ebony enhanced the program by developing a practical localised resource to support staff in applying their learning beyond the training session and in practical real world settings. Her approach reinforced that cultural safety, awareness, and understanding are shared responsibilities of practitioners and that ongoing learning is essential.

This work emphasised the importance of embedding cultural safety as a continuous practice across mainstream organisations working with our Community.

## Calming Waters

Previously 'Adolescents Using Violence in The Home (AVITH)', the program was renamed, recognising young people's strength, resilience and capacity to make meaningful change. To ensure the program is offering a strength's-based approach, it was important for young people to be able to enter the program and be supported in an age-appropriate manner and not labelled or described by language that is used when

working with adults who are using family violence.

Across the past 12 months the program has support 10 young people and their families to implement strategies and tools that support in facilitating a safer home environment.

## Justice

In the 2024/2025 year, Wathaurong supported 20 community members to successfully complete a Work and Development Permit (WDPs). Community members worked off a combined amount of \$45,115.34 in fines through meaningful participation in approved activities.

The WDP scheme is an initiative that allows eligible individuals to reduce or clear their fines by engaging in activities such as volunteering, education, medical treatment, or counselling. It is specifically designed to assist people experiencing hardship, such as financial difficulties, mental illness, addiction, family violence or homelessness, and empowers them to address their fines in a constructive and dignified way.

By participating in the WDP program, community members not only reduce their debt burden but also gain opportunities to connect with support services, build life skills, and strengthen their sense of belonging within the community.

Wathaurong's Justice programs have also supported 12 young people throughout the year. Staff have walked alongside young people who are at risk of encountering the justice system or who are already in contact with the justice system. We have seen young people re-engage in education, develop their passions and hobbies, re-engage in culture, learn more about their own identity and and step into who they would like to be moving forward.

# Family Services Report

## Homelessness

Over the past year, our Homelessness Entry Point has seen significant growth and success, resulting in a three-year funding extension, transitioning the program from a pilot to a permanent fixture. The partnership with NEAMI and Head to Health being located in the same building has enhanced our ability to support them in providing culturally sensitive support, also being able to collaborate more organically, leading to better outcomes for our community members. Our team has been relentless in advocating for housing options, despite initial funding limitations that excluded physical resources like housing. Through strong advocacy, we negotiated local agreements with DFFH and mainstream providers, allowing us to manage tenancies and provide support for four transitional properties, with four more in negotiation. Advocacy hasn't stopped there, our team are also currently in negotiation around gaining us the same nomination rights to Crisis properties as this is still a gap. Having the ability to nominate into both THMs and Crisis properties will enable us to ensure community members receive comprehensive support to transition to long-term housing solutions such as social, community, affordable housing, private rental, or home ownership. Additionally, we secured self-determination funding for three years, creating two transitional housing support worker positions to ensure the success of these arrangements.



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The **Housing First** program at Wathaurong is a culturally safe, community member-led initiative supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members experiencing chronic homelessness. It prioritises rapid access to long-term housing without preconditions, followed by tailored wrap-around support. This program, part of Homes Victoria's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination and guided by the Mana-na Woon-tyeen Maar-takoort framework, is the first wholly Aboriginal Housing First initiative in Victoria, operating alongside Ngwala Willumbong. We aim to support 18 individuals at any given time, with monthly support ranging from 20-29 individuals.

This year, we were invited by Sacred Heart Mission to partner with them and the Salvation Army to deliver the **Journey to Social Inclusion (J2SI)** program. J2SI is an evidence-based, relationship-focused program designed to end chronic homelessness through a Housing First approach, providing up to three years of intensive support. However, the partnership presented challenges, including limited resourcing for leadership and back-of-house support, and the requirement to use the Salvation Army's client management system, which conflicts with our commitment to data sovereignty. We are in discussions with Sacred Heart Mission, Salvation Army, and Homes Vic, supported by Aboriginal Housing Victoria, to determine the feasibility of our participation.



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The **Initial Assessment and Planning (IAP)** program at Wathaurong is a frontline homelessness response initiative. It provides timely, culturally safe support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members experiencing or at risk of homelessness or family violence. Despite being understaffed for most of the year, our IAP workers successfully completed assessments for 332 individuals.

The **Aboriginal Private Rental Assistance Program (APRAP)** supports Aboriginal households that are at risk of losing their private rental tenancy, experiencing homelessness but can be sustainably housed in private rental with short-term support, transitioning from crisis or social housing into private rental, or financially disadvantaged or impacted by family violence. The program operates through a dual-role model: the APRAP Broker, who builds relationships with real estate agents and landlords and administers brokerage funds, and the APRAP Plus Worker, who provides direct client support. This year, APRAP established 105 new tenancies and contributed to reduced preventable exits from the private rental market, improving housing stability for Aboriginal households.



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# Family Services Report

The **Aboriginal Tenants at Risk (ATAR)** program aims to prevent eviction and housing instability by helping tenants resolve disputes, maintain housing, and understand their rights and responsibilities. This year, the program supported 44 households with property clean-ups, repairs, maintenance, rent in advance, and household items.

We continue to collaborate with local stakeholders to help our community achieve the best possible outcomes in establishing and maintaining tenancies. Key networks include the Barwon South West Housing Network (BSWHN), Victorian Indigenous State-wide Homelessness Network (VISHN), and Barwon Local Area Service Network (BLASN), which enhance referral pathways and ensure coordinated service delivery across housing, health, and wellbeing domains.



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# Health Services Report

## Health Services Staff

**Duane Luki**  
Acting Executive Manager Health Services

**Emma Brown**  
Business Support Officer

## Health Promotions

**Mick Ryan**  
Health Promotions Manager

**Alf Oram**  
Cultural Support Advisor & Men's Group Coordinator

**Benjamin Silva**  
Health Promotions Coordinator

## General Practitioners

**Dr Ed Poliness**  
Medical Director

**Dr Kevin Chang**  
Senior GP

**Dr Brigette Agostinelli**  
Senior GP

**Dr David Corbet**  
Senior GP

**Dr Eimir Diviney**  
Senior GP

**Dr Sneha Kini**  
Senior GP

**Dr Edward Carson**  
Senior GP

**Dr Mei Lin Lee**  
Senior GP

**Dr Edward Plant**  
Senior GP

**Dr Shoshanna Slattery**  
Senior GP

**Dr Kristen Ham**  
GP Registrar

**Dr David Leitinger**  
GP Registrar

**Dr Alex Webster**  
GP Registrar

**Dr Zoe Vaughan**  
GP Registrar

## Registered Nurses

**Skye Duncan**  
Clinical Team Leader

**Tim O'Callaghan**

**Todd Fry**

**Jacqui Myers**

**Hope Mathumbu**

**Bridie Bracken**

## Women & Children (Mch & Kms)

**Debbie Woolnough**  
Woman's and Children's Program Co Ordinator

**Fiona Bell**  
MCH Nurse

**Elyce Henry**  
MCH Nurse

**Kaela Schlensog**  
Aboriginal Health Worker with MCH

**Lauren**  
Koori Maternity Service

**Claire**  
Koori Maternity Service

**Piper Knox**  
Aboriginal Health Worker with KMS

## Aboriginal Health Workers

**Kerrie Alsop**  
Integrated Team Care (ITC) Program Coordinator

**Piper Knox**

**Jannalli Lilburn**

**Ryan Trickey**

**Kaela Schlensog**

## Medical Reception & Admin

**Samantha Watts**  
Health Administration Team Leader

**Lynne Lancaster**  
Senior Reception/Paediatrician Co-Ordinator

**Atawhai Ogle**  
Medical Reception

**Jane McInnes**  
Medical Reception

**Valinda Dimovsky**  
Medical Reception

**Chris West**  
Medical Reception

**Tracey Watts**  
Medical Reception

**Nyawi Black**  
Medical Reception

**Eileen Smith**  
Patient Transport

**Steven Blackney**  
Patient Transport

**Tommy Kornmann**  
Patient Transport

## Specialist Consultants And Allied Health

**Orisi Qaranivalu**  
Pharmacist

**Inga Tribe**  
Liver Clinic Nurse

**Kirsty McColl**  
Liver Clinic Nurse

**Dr Huong Nguyen**  
Dementia intervention

**Natasha Ling**  
Psychologist

**Ben Gray**  
Clinical Neuropsychologist

**Dr Samantha Worboys**  
Endocrinologist

**Dr Aaron Choy**  
Endocrinologist

**Dr Su Yi Mon**  
Endocrinologist

**Dr Susan Blair**  
Renal Physician

**Dr Christine Somerville**  
Renal Physician

**Dr Alex Bonner**  
Obstetrician

**Dr Danielle Pickett**  
Obstetrician

**Dr Jane Standish**  
Paediatrician

**Dr Alex Gordon**  
Paediatrician

**Dr Daniel Peyton**  
Paediatrician

**Dr Kate Wilkins**  
Paediatrician

**Dr Ian Tang**  
Paediatrician

**Dr Mitchell Simpson**  
Paediatrician

## Social & Emotional Wellbeing

**Grant Gibson**  
Social & Emotional Wellbeing Manager

**Emily McDonald**  
Social & Emotional Wellbeing Team Leader

**Michelle Polidano**  
Social & Emotional Wellbeing Team Leader

**Shirley Darcy**  
Social & Emotional Wellbeing Clinical Lead

**Rebecca Hoskin**  
Social & Emotional Wellbeing Clinical Lead

**Phil King**  
CCC Suicide Prevention Coordinator

**Mark Dekker**  
Alcohol & Other Drugs Team Leader

**Philip Drummond**  
Alcohol & Other Drugs Clinician

**Tamika Marinos**  
Alcohol & Other Drugs Clinician

**Maria Akinbiyi**  
Alcohol & Other Drugs Clinician

**Achford Waini**  
Alcohol & Other Drugs Clinician

**Nicole Kirby**  
Women's Group Coordinator

**Kiri Tawhai**  
Women's Group Coordinator

**Jade Atkinson**  
SEWB worker

**Sara Shanahan**  
SEWB worker

**Tracey Watts**  
Intake worker

**Jess McCoach**  
Bringing Them Home worker

**Judy Rosson**  
SEWB Counsellor

**Pepa Castro**  
SEWB Counsellor

**Ben Gray**  
Neuropsychologist. & Step Thru MH & AoD worker

**Natasha Ling**  
Psychologist

**Gwenda Black**  
Cultural Support Advisor

**Alf Oram**  
Cultural support advisor and Men's group facilitator

**Stephanie King**  
CCC Aftercare worker

**Rachael Cater**  
Head to Health SEWB Worker

**Mariah Andrews**  
Cherry Creek SEWB Worker

## Balert Care Connections

**Sushimita Mahat**  
Manager

**Shayesta Sharma**  
Business Development Partner

**Liz Abrahams**  
Team leader

**Annmaree Wills**  
Elder Care Support Coordinator

**Kiara Smith**  
Elder Care Support Connector

**Amanda Carter**  
Support Coordinator

**Heather Game**  
Support Coordinator

**Rob Woodward**  
Support Coordinator

Plus casual Support workers:

**Andrew Devern**

**Dominic Scheelings**

**Ebony Rayner**

**Edward Dweh**

**Katrina Thompson**

**Kirandeep Kaur**

**Laura Noonan**

**Lochlan Bourke**

**Marle O'Toole**

**Nicole McFadyen**

**Nikki Whitfield**

**Norelle Hopper**

**Olivia Van Den Bosch**

**Rachel Carter**

**Sarah Davidson**

**Sophie Hamann**

**Sophie Samakai**

**Theresa Sailor**



# Health Services, NDIS and Aged Care Executive Manager Report

**Duane Luki**

I am pleased to present the 2024–25 Annual Report for Health, NDIS and Aged Care at Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative. This year has been marked by significant progress, strong partnerships, and ongoing dedication to delivering culturally safe, community-led health services.

Over the past year, Wathaurong has expanded its health services and increased staffing to meet the community's needs. We have undertaken quality reviews of programs to allow opportunities for future growth and development. Wathaurong is dedicated to delivering up to date and culturally safe health services.

We are excited to say Wathaurong health services have started its preparation in broadening its boundaries in developing community relationships with Western Health Hospital, the Mercy Hospital and Wunggurwil Dhurrung Centre to assist all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families in the region. Census 2021 tells a picture of 2.5 thousand Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families that reside in the Wyndham city region. Census report for Wathaurong current service boundaries including Colac for 2021 is estimated for those who have identified 4000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families. To date Wathaurong health service has accounted for 4500 community inclusive of non-Indigenous family members and 3000 identified that are active in attending our health service. With our boundaries expanding we estimate that Wathaurong health service will be future planning beyond 2025 to service 10,000 plus Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families.

## Barwon Health partnerships

Wathaurong Health Service has built partnerships by joining key committees in Geelong and the Western region, including the Aboriginal Health Improvement Initiative, which seeks to improve First Nations peoples' health care access in local emergency and urgent care settings. Wathaurong also serves on the Board Primary and Population Health Committee, and participates in The Public Health Emergency Sub-Committee, which develops recommendations for the MEMPC. The MEMPC focuses on integrated planning for preparedness and resilience against events like heat waves and pandemics, helping shape strategic health services for Greater Geelong.

A key development in 2024–25 has been our consortium with the Mental Health and Wellbeing local Service. Within the partnership the new facility is now fully operational as of March 2025, and Wathaurong has secured three dedicated positions to support care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 26 and over. While one position is filled and recruitment continues, this partnership will deliver culturally safe, moderate to acute mental health/ well-being support.

Wathaurong partners with Barwon Health at Cherry Creek Youth Justice Centre to deliver culturally informed support through SEWB and Aboriginal health workers. This team ensures care for Aboriginal youth during detention and on release by providing discharge summaries to Wathaurong Health Service to engage and

provide appropriate wrap around resources.

Wathaurong Health Service and Barwon Health have proposed two full-time Project Officer positions, one at each organisation, to implement the Partnerships for Culturally Safe Cancer Care project over three years. The initiative aims to improve access to culturally appropriate cancer care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people at Barwon Health, Colac Area Health, and Great Ocean Road Health. The Project Officers will work closely with Wathaurong community members and stakeholders to ensure the project's success. We look to roll out and recruit to this position in the coming months.

This year saw the official rollout of the Wathaurong Medical Van, an important step in improving access to health services. The mobile clinic now visits various locations on a scheduled basis and provides general health checks, chronic disease support, and health promotion. The van has already proven to be a valuable asset for clients facing transport or mobility barriers and strengthens our ability to deliver care where it's needed most.

Wathaurong's goal of 50 health assessments per month has been exceeded by 63 extra health assessments thanks to the outreach model of care including health assessments conducted at the Karroong Kanyool (Home of the Young) Wilkins Close Men's group and look to expand its participation with the women's group.

## Health-Based Response to Public

## Intoxication

In response to legislative changes in Victoria, Wathaurong has led the development of a health-based response to public intoxication, now operating 7 days per week. Our team includes on-call staff, two Drug & Alcohol workers, a dedicated Team Leader, and oversight by the SEWB Manager.

We are currently responding to referrals from Victoria Police to support individuals who are intoxicated in public. This approach replaces a punitive model with one focused on care, dignity, and cultural safety. We acknowledge the decades of advocacy by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that brought about this change, and we thank our partners at VicPol and Barwon Health Emergency Department for their support.

## Looking Ahead

As we reflect on the 2024–25 financial year, it's clear that our strength lies in our people – our staff, partners, and community. Together, we are building a responsive, resilient health system grounded in culture and compassion. While there is still more to achieve, we remain committed to innovation, collaboration, and excellence in service delivery.

Thank you for your continued trust and support.



# Health Services Report

Over the 2024/25 financial year, Wathaurong Health Services experienced a significant increase in patient engagement, with a total of 2735 regular clients and a total of 4876 patients accessing clinical services across all sites.

Community members continued to utilise both face-to-face consultations and Telehealth appointments, receiving support from our dedicated team of General Practitioners, Nurses, AHW/AHP, Specialist consultants and Allied Health. This ongoing engagement reflects a growing trust in the service and reinforces our commitment to making healthcare accessible, flexible, and responsive to the needs of our community.

A key area of growth this year has been in the delivery of preventative and chronic disease management services. A total of 713 Aboriginal Health Checks were completed throughout the year, representing a significant increase from the previous year's total of 574. Unlike, the number of GP Management Plans / Mental Health care Plans decreased to 484, compared to 653 last financial year. These reductions come down to shortening the consultation's times to 20 minutes. This reduced the Dr abilities to do opportunistic Treatment Plans. With this going forward with the new Chronic Condition GP management plans, promoting through CQI focused actives, highlighting the proactive approach being taken toward long-term health planning and disease prevention within our community, ensuring individuals receive continuous and comprehensive care tailored to their needs.

In Colac, our commitment to delivering culturally appropriate care continues, with both GPs and AHPs maintaining a weekly presence to support local clients.

To further address service gaps across our broader catchment area, the Wathaurong Medical Van has been actively delivering outreach medical services to ensure that more community members can access essential healthcare closer to home. Despite increasing demand, Wathaurong Health Services remains focused on providing high-quality, culturally safe healthcare that evolves alongside the needs of our community

## Health Promotions

### *TIS (Tackling Indigenous Smoking) Koori Way/Flip the Vape*

The Koori Way youth smoking cessation program had a profoundly positive impact on youth within the Wathaurong Aboriginal Community by providing culturally appropriate education and support to help young people make informed choices about smoking. Delivered with a strong focus on community values and cultural identity, the program empowered youth through storytelling, peer support, and interactive workshops that connected them with Elders and role models. This holistic approach helped build resilience and confidence, encouraging participants to resist peer pressure and embrace healthier lifestyles. As a result, the program not only increased awareness about the risks of smoking but also fostered stronger connections between young people and their cultural heritage.

To extend the reach and effectiveness of the Koori Way program, we strategically engaged Koorie Education Support Officers (KESOs) to assist in its delivery within local schools. Their involvement was instrumental in

broadening program coverage, as KESOs provided vital links between schools, students, families, and the community. Their trusted relationships and deep cultural knowledge ensured the program was delivered in a way that was respectful, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of Aboriginal students. By partnering with KESOs, we were able to embed the program within the school environment, increasing participation and enabling consistent engagement with the youth cohort across the region.

### *Wathaurong Youth Boxing Program*

The Wathaurong Youth Boxing Program has been a highly successful and well-received initiative within the community, providing a culturally safe and empowering space for Aboriginal young people to engage in physical fitness, build confidence, and strengthen their mental wellbeing. Facilitated by Jason Caine of Corner Boxing, the program has run regularly throughout the year and has seen strong and consistent participation. More than just a boxing class, it has fostered personal growth, discipline, resilience, and a sense of pride and belonging among the youth involved. From this program, a dedicated group known as Wathaurong Boxing has been proudly established, further solidifying the positive impact and momentum of this initiative. The continued success of the program is a testament to the value of culturally relevant, community-driven youth engagement.

### *Woonggoorrweel Deadly Games*

The Woonggoorrweel Deadly Games has had a deeply positive impact on the Wathaurong community, creating a culturally safe and meaningful space where

# Health Services Report

connection, pride, and wellbeing thrive. By bringing together Elders, families, and young people, the event has strengthened community ties and provided a platform for cultural celebration and learning across generations. Through the revival of traditional games and storytelling, the program has helped reinforce cultural identity and pride, while also promoting physical activity and mental wellbeing in a way that reflects the values and strengths of the community.

By combining traditional Aboriginal games with modern movement-based activities, the program is actively contributing to efforts to close the gap in health and wellbeing outcomes. It encourages participation in culturally relevant physical activity, helping to reduce chronic disease risk, improve mental health, and support social connection. The program also supports Aboriginal-led health promotion, ensuring that solutions are shaped by community voices and cultural knowledge. This approach strengthens cultural resilience and contributes to a healthier future for the Wathaurong community.

### *Merreedyeg Tucker Program*

The Merreedyeg Tucker program has had a great impact on the Wathaurong community, especially for our young mob. It brings people together through food and culture, helping everyone learn more about traditional ingredients like kangaroo, bush tomatoes, and native herbs. Young people get the chance to cook, share meals, and connect with culture, which builds pride and strengthens community ties. It's also a fun way to learn about healthy eating and how food can support our wellbeing.

By using traditional ingredients in modern recipes, the program shows that healthy food can be tasty, simple, and connected to culture. It helps our young mob understand how good nutrition can make a big difference in their lives—like having more energy, feeling better, and staying strong. Eating well can also help prevent health problems like diabetes and heart disease, which are more common in Aboriginal communities. That's why Merreedyeg Tucker is helping to close the gap—by teaching healthy habits in a way that feels right for our people and supports a stronger, healthier future.

### *Wathaurong Men's Group*

The Wathaurong Men's Group, proudly facilitated by Alfie Oram, continues to provide a culturally safe, inclusive, and supportive space for Aboriginal men within the community. Held weekly, the group offers an opportunity for participants to come together, strengthen cultural identity, and build meaningful social connections. Throughout the year, the group has benefited from the involvement of Wathaurong staff across various programs, who have delivered engaging presentations focused on men's health, wellbeing, and community support. These sessions have played a key role in empowering men with knowledge and tools to support themselves and their families. A significant highlight this year has been the establishment of a new dedicated gathering space at 33 Wilkins Close, which has enhanced the group's ability to meet regularly in a welcoming, purpose-built environment. This new location marks an important step forward in supporting cultural resilience, community engagement, and long-term wellbeing for the men involved.

### *Men's Group Health Assessments*

As part of the ongoing commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal men in our community, the Wathaurong Men's Group participated in a series of health assessments delivered through the Wathaurong medical van. This initiative provided the men with convenient access to culturally safe and confidential health checks in a familiar and supportive environment. The presence of the medical van at Men's Group gatherings allowed for meaningful engagement with health professionals and encouraged open conversations around physical and mental health. By bringing healthcare directly to the group, the program helped reduce barriers to access and promoted early intervention and ongoing wellbeing. This culturally responsive approach was well received by the men and reinforced the importance of meeting community needs in ways that are respectful, accessible, and grounded in culture

### *Integrated Team Care (ITC) Program*

The Integrated Team Care (ITC) Program at Wathaurong Aboriginal Health Service continues to provide culturally safe, person-centred support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living with chronic conditions.

Over the past year, we have walked alongside community to ensure care is not only clinically appropriate but also grounded in culture, respect, and trust. Support ranges from general care coordination to intensive assistance during critical times, including palliative care.

Many of those we support are family and community

# Health Services Report

members we have grown up with, making the work both deeply personal and at times emotionally heavy. The trust built through these relationships often extends beyond formal ITC matters, reflecting the importance of cultural safety in fostering connection and better health outcomes.

The impact of the program is seen in community members avoiding hospital admissions, attending long-overdue specialist appointments, families feeling included, and clients gaining confidence in managing their health. At the centre of these outcomes is the cultural knowledge and lived experience of our Aboriginal workforce, which remains essential in shaping how care is provided.

The ITC Program demonstrates the power of clinical care delivered through culture, relationships, and respect. It is both a privilege and a responsibility to be invited into people's lives at such critical times, and we remain committed to supporting our community with dignity and integrity.

## Aboriginal Health Workers

Our Aboriginal Health Workers continue to make an incredible difference in the lives of our community. The cultural knowledge, trust, and compassion they bring ensures care is not only clinically sound but also welcoming, safe, and grounded in culture.

AHWs are involved in almost every aspect of the care we provide. From visiting specialist services to community events, our AHWs are there walking alongside our mob, offering support, guidance, and cultural understanding every step of the way.

AHWs are what make an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation truly unique and special. It is their connection to community, their lived experience, and their commitment to walking with our people that sets our model of care apart.

We are so lucky to have our AHW team carrying the heart of community into everything we do, and we deeply value the difference they make in the lives of our clients, families, and wider community every day.

## Patient Transport

Patient Transport plays a vital role in supporting our community every day. They make sure our mob get to and from their appointments safely, comfortably, and on time, removing one of the greatest barriers to accessing health care.

Our Patient Transport drivers are often the first to engage with community when accessing our services. Their reliability and care mean our mob can attend the services they need with confidence and dignity and we often hear community reflect positively on the yarns shared on the way to their appointments.

We are so proud of our team and the critical role they play in building relationships, easing worries, and reminding people they're not alone on their health journey.

## Women's & Children's Program

Continuity of care in the KMS and MCH teams is essential for fostering trust, promoting healthy development, and ensuring consistent support for families. This ongoing connection supports early identification of concerns,

tailored guidance, and more effective interventions. Continuity also empowers the parents, as they feel heard and supported, contributing to better outcomes in areas such as attachment, emotional wellbeing, and overall child development.

One of the biggest achievements for the KMS and MCH team is coordinating the move from Morgan Street to the Youth Hub. This relied on the team to communicate and plan months in advance, so that the transition caused minimal disruption to the community and the team.

Other highlights for the Women's and Children's program this year included Debbie Woolnough, Elyce Henry and Fiona Bell attended the Municipal Association of Victoria and Department of Health Maternal Child Health Conference, Elyce Henry completed First 1000 days training, and an Ultrasound being donated to KMS by Dr Frankie Maxwell, one of the GPs who has a women's health interest and has left the region. The Ngardang Popup Obstetric Clinics continues to run smoothly with KMS.

## Koori Maternity Services

KMS provides culturally appropriate care for Aboriginal women and support to their families.

The overall aim of the program is to:

- Optimise the health and wellbeing of women and their babies
- Identify and manage maternal and foetal risk factors, particularly early in pregnancy

It is important for Aboriginal women to have available access to KMS (Koori Maternity Service) so that both

# Health Services Report

mum and baby are provided with culturally appropriate pregnancy care and are healthy for when the time comes to have their baby.

Our services provide support to women during their pregnancy and when it's time for both mum and baby to be discharged from hospital, KMS continue that care by providing a home visiting service.

This financial year our KMS team supported 66 women with their pregnancy care, with 52 babies born with KMS over the year.

## Maternal & Child Health Services

Wathaurong is now an independent Maternal Child Health Service directly employing MCH nurses, where we used to provide this service in partnership with the City of Greater Geelong. The program was developed to help improve health outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, by:

- Giving them choice to access an Aboriginal led MCH service
- Culturally centered
- Accessibility to their local Aboriginal community and organization
- Self-determination and empowerment – a core principle in delivering this program.
- Tailored support to the unique needs of the families.
- Enhanced programs to offer intensive support for families at risk.
- The Program is delivered by an Aboriginal Health service.

The MCH Service provides both Universal and Enhanced

programs to cater for all families.

Between 1st July 2024 and 30th June 2025, there were 70 children enrolled in the Wathaurong Universal MCH and 48 children enrolled in Wathaurong Enhanced MCH.

The MCH team has seen a significant increase in the number of children and hours required over the past 4 years – a 128% increase in Universal care since 2020, and a 45% increase in Enhanced care since 2021.

There has been a significant increase in the number of unexpected external referrals to Wathaurong MCH. These children have not had care through the Koori Maternity Service and are new to Wathaurong MCH. The service was not aware of these babies to plan for scheduled appointments and therefore increasing the workload.

## Social & Emotional Wellbeing

Wathaurong SEWB programs have provided support to over 400 community members over the past 12 months, through a range of group & individual service delivery approaches.

This includes:

- 110 Community Members (63 Male, 47 Female) supported by our AoD service
- 259 Community Members (81 Male, 178 Female) supported by our broader SEWB services &
- 88 Women engaged with Women's Group

During this time, our community's need for support has continued to grow, with all SEWB services experiencing high levels of demand, and particularly for community members who experience unstable housing and

financial hardship.

The following programs and support were available:

- Social and Emotional Wellbeing program
- Alcohol and other drugs program
- Public Intoxication Response program
- Bringing Them Home program
- Women's Group and Men's Group
- Psychology, including Neuropsychology
- Therapeutic Counselling services
- Support for Community Member access to external therapeutic counselling services
- Culture Care Connect – Suicide Prevention Support

We are continuing our support for a range of external partnerships, with Wathaurong workers involved in the following services:

- Medicare Mental Health Hub, :NEAMI & Drummond St
- GCQ Locals: Barwon Health, Wellways & ERMHA
- Step Thru Care: NEAMI, Drummond St & Windana
- Cherry Creek Youth Justice Centre

Over the past 12 months we have continued to strengthen our team culture, our direct leadership support and our opportunities for continuing professional development for our staff.

We have strengthened our care pathways and our use of the National SEWB framework in all aspects of our service delivery and maintained our accreditation under the National Mental Health Standards. We've reviewed and trialled some new approaches to service delivery

# Health Services Report

including and enhanced our practices in:

- Individual Support planning
- Safety Planning
- Increased focus on including carers and family in our work
- Implementation of the new Client Management System
- Strengthening our approach to Practice Reflection – the Wathaurong way

We've made an important contribution to Wathaurong wide priorities

- Supporting good internal communication and collaboration
- Strong collaboration within health division and with Balert Care
- Embracing and implementing the change with the new CMS
- Looking after our broader Wathaurong colleagues

Our WOMENS GROUP has grown from strength to strength, maintaining strong engagement with 20-25 women attending weekly group, and 88 women now engaging in the group at different times. Special mention here to Nicole Kirby and Kiri Tawhai for their awesome support, care and facilitation. This year's activities have featured cultural crafts, excursions to exhibitions, guest speakers and presenters, and informational and workshop sessions. These activities provided a culturally safe and supportive environment, allowing women to connect, learn, and access valuable health information and community resources.

Our MENS GROUP has also enjoyed more frequent and direct support from the broader SEWB Team.

Our BRINGING THEM HOME team has continued to provide support to members of the Stolen Generation and has resourced a number of informal group gatherings and facilitated healing workshops. We have been able to extend the funding of our BTH program for an additional 12 months, and we are currently funded until June 30 2026.

Our SEWB TEAM has continued to support community events, including Sorry Day, Apology Day and It's a Mob Thing. We have also received a 12-month extension to our CCC (Culture Care Connect) contract, which is currently funded until 30 June 2026. We also received an additional \$50,000 in funding this current calendar year to support community members to attend external Psychology, Assessment and Counselling services.

Our YOUNG PEOPLE: We have strengthened our approach to supporting young people, through a family inclusive approach and providing SEWB supports at the Youth Hub

Our COMMUNITY MEMBERS: We have seen many examples of growth and positive outcomes for community members, including strengthened family relationships & community connection, improved housing stability, participation in, employment and improved social and emotional wellbeing.

Service Responses commonly include:

- Supporting access to services within Wathaurong
- Supporting community through times of hardship, grief and loss

- Facilitating referral and linkage to external services.
- Providing advocacy for Community Members to receive culturally appropriate care.
- Assisting with referrals to detox/ rehab, forensic case management, care and recovery coordination, drug and alcohol counselling or education.
- Providing direct therapy and counselling to reduce distress and to help Community manage psychological problems.
- Creating opportunities to heal and connect to community, country, culture and identity through group work, brief counselling, referrals, Community events and activities.
- Supporting community members to strengthen their connections to family, culture, and community.

# Health Services Report

## Balert Care Connections (NDIS & Aged Care support)

In 2024–2025, the Balert Care Program continued to deliver culturally safe, inclusive, and responsive support to carers, families, and community members. The team has supported:

- 34 NDIS clients
- 12 PYP clients
- 42 My Aged Care clients
- 8 Aged Care Brokerage clients (Baptcare, Cultura, Genu)
- 25 ADLO clients

A major achievement was the successful securing of **Carers Respite Funding for 2025–2027**, which will enable support for **150 carers annually** and provide **3,000 hours of respite care per year**, significantly enhancing our capacity to care for those who care for others.

We also welcomed the **extension of CHSP funding until 2027**, supporting a smooth transition into the new **In-Home Supports model** under the aged care reforms. This extension ensures continuity of care and allows us to adapt our services to meet evolving community needs.

The **Elder Care Support Program** was extended for an additional year, with funding approved for **two new staff positions – a Coordinator and a Connector** – to strengthen outreach, navigation, and culturally appropriate support for Elders and their families.

Throughout the year, we hosted three **ECS group sessions** that drew strong community engagement.

These sessions focused on **aged care assessments, CHSP changes, and Elder Rights Advocacy**, and were praised for being **informative, culturally respectful, and empowering**.

They played a key role in building awareness and understanding of aged care reforms and available supports.

We continued to collaborate with stakeholders to support reform implementation. With **SDAP approval**, we commenced the **Home Care Package registration process**, which is currently underway. We also submitted our application for **NDIS Supported Independent Living (SIL) registration**, expanding our ability to support individuals with disabilities.

Demand for **ADLO support** remained high, with many community members receiving tailored assistance to confidently begin their journey into the **NDIS system**. These achievements reflect the Balert Care Program's ongoing commitment to empowering our community and improving access to inclusive, culturally safe care and support services.



# Wathaurong Glass and Arts Executive Manager Report

**Mark Edwards**

I would like to begin by paying my respects to our Respected Elders, past and present, and to community members who have had family passed through to the dreamtime during the past 12 months. I also extend my gratitude to our staff, the Executive Management team and the board of the Wathaurong Co-Operative for their commitment to this business throughout the year.

## Financial Summary

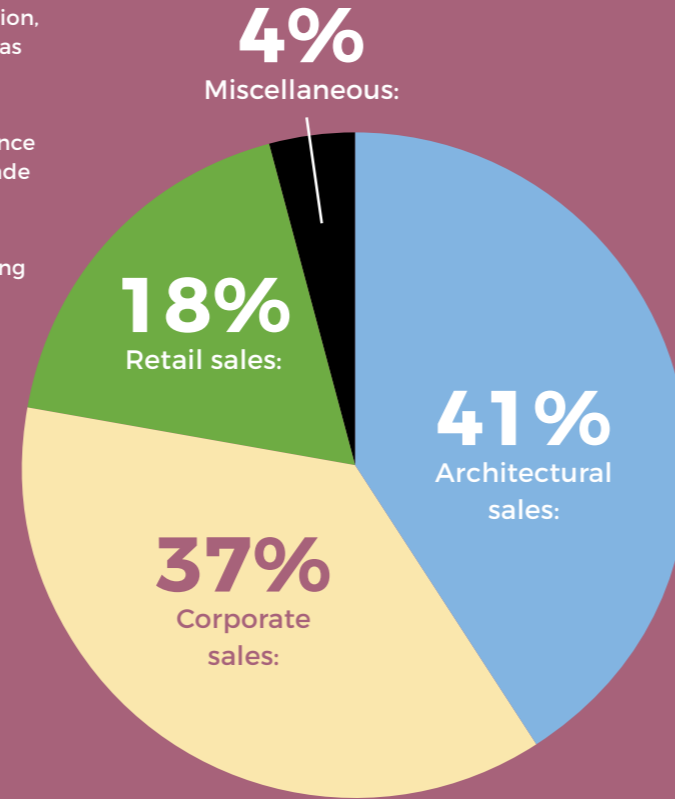
As anticipated, we achieved a modest net profit of 4%. This outcome was largely due to the revised pricing structure introduced in August. In recent years, we absorbed multiple expense increases; however, it became necessary to make adjustments to ensure sustainability.

## Sales breakdown:

Our largest expenses remain wages and superannuation, cost of goods, rent, and general operating costs such as electricity.

With our relocation to 18 Rodney Road (WAC owned building), rent has been reduced in the short term. Once operations are fully settled, an adjustment will be made to align with normal rental costs, which will in turn generate income for WAC.

Looking ahead to 2026, I am cautious about forecasting continued sales growth. The broader economy shows signs of slowing—this is evident both in our local business community, where “For Lease” signs are common, and in conversations with fellow small business operators across sectors.



## Operation

It is official: we have successfully relocated to 18 Rodney Road. The building process took 12 months, and I would like to acknowledge Bruce and his team for delivering an outstanding showroom and office space. Importantly, the labour costs associated with the build were reinvested directly into WAC, a strong example of how Indigenous economies grow and thrive.

While the physical footprint of the new premises is smaller, careful planning and purpose-built design have allowed us to maximise the use of space efficiently.

## Staff

Our team—Jarrod, Jermaine, and Daniel—have continued to demonstrate dedication in delivering quality products to our customers. I am deeply grateful for their loyalty and commitment during the transition, which was completed without any operational downtime, ensuring positive outcomes for our bottom line.

A special note: Jarrod married Angela in November 2024

and enjoyed a well-deserved extended overseas break to celebrate this milestone with family.

On a personal note, I have set a tentative retirement date for sometime in 2027. It has been an honour and privilege to spend the past 27 years establishing, growing, and maintaining this social enterprise into a respected and sustainable business. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the current Board, past Boards, the community, partner organisations, and most importantly, to all current and former staff who have been the true driving force behind Wathaurong Glass.

## Retail / Wholesale Glass Art

The relocation temporarily shifted focus away from retail and wholesale glass art. Sales in this category held steady at 18%. This area has strong foundations and clear potential for growth, particularly with increased investment in social media promotion. Currently, this responsibility is shared between Jarrod and myself, but we recognise the benefit of appointing a dedicated staff member in future.

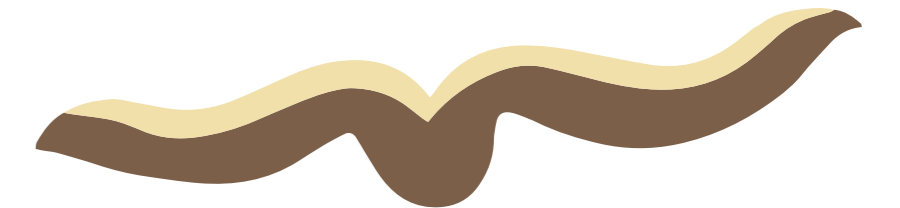
## Architectural Glass

Architectural glass sales remained steady at 41%. While the number of orders decreased slightly, revenue held due to the revised pricing structure. For example, in 2024 we sold 103 Acknowledgement Plaques; this year, 77 plaques were sold.

Despite the decline in volume, demand for window and door glass increased, supported by significant orders from Goolum Goolum, Ridge Development, and Hutchinson Construction (Sacred Heart project).

## Miscellaneous Sales

Miscellaneous sales (4%) include purchased items we resell—such as chrome display stands, pine presentation boxes—as well as in-house design services and freight charges.



# OUR PARTNERS 2024 / 2025

- |  |  |   |   |
|--|--|---|---|
| AFL Barwon   | Cultura  | In The Skies Restaurant and Bowls   | Surfcoast for Reconciliation  |
| Ambulance Victoria                                     | Deakin University – School of Medicine                     | JB Commercial   | Surfing Victoria  |
| Ange Jeffrey Jewellery                                 | Deakin University – School of Psychology                   | Kangan Institute  | Swinburne University  |
| Anglesea Art Space                                     | Dell   | Kardinia Park Stadium Trust   | Tarndwarncourt  |
| Armour Security  | Dementia Australia   | Kenstra   | Telstra   |
| Aussie Broadband                                       | Department of Education and Training                       | Killara   | The Graham (Polly) Farmer Foundation  |
| Australian Hearing                                     | Department of Energy, Environment & Climate Action (DEECA) | Larrakia Bilirra  | The Marquee Guy   |
| Baiyami Art  | Department of Families, Fairness and Housing               | LBW Auditors  | The National Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Health Worker Association (NATSIHWA) |
| Barwon Health  | Department of Health                                       | Lenovo  | The Orange Door – Family Safety Victoria  |
| Barwon Local Area Education Consultative Group (LAECG) | Department of Justice and Community Safety                 | Life Without Barriers   | The Phillips Foundation   |
| Barwon South West Dhelk Dja                            | Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry & Regions (DJSIR)     | LWT Systems   | The Salvation Army  |
| Barwon South West RAJAC                                | Drummond Street  | Mackillop Family Services   | The Victorian Aboriginal Health Service (VAHS)  |
| Barwon Water   | Dufflebird   | Macquire Butcher Shop   | Total Events  |
| Bellarine AV   | Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation                        | McHarry's Buslines  | Unearthed Electrics   |
| Belmont Lions Football Netball Club                    | ermah365   | Meli  | Utilitise IT  |
| Beyond Blue  | First Peoples Assembly of Victoria                         | Microsoft   | VACCA   |
| Birregurra Cricket Club                                | FoodShare Geelong  | MultiTek Solutions  | Viatek  |
| Birregurra Football Netball Club                       | Geelong Aboriginal Employment Taskforce (GAET)             | Murray City Country Coast GP Training   | VicHealth   |
| Birregurra Men's Shed                                  | Geelong Arts Centre  | National Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (NACCHO)           | Victorian Aboriginal Children and Young Peoples Alliance                              |
| Birregurra Recreational Reserve Committee              | Geelong Cats   | National Indigenous Australians Agency (NIAA)                                   | Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation (VACCHO)                       |
| Child First  | Geelong Chamber of Commerce                                | National Indigenous Knowledges Education Research Innovation (NIKERI) Institute | Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Limited (VACSAL)                  |
| City of Greater Geelong (COGG)                         | Geelong Community Foundation                               | Neami   | Victoria Police   |
| Clinical Labs  | Geelong Kindergarten Association                           | Northern Bay College  | VIVA Energy   |
| Colac Area Health & Youth Hub                          | Geelong Magistrates Court                                  | One Fire Reconciliation Group   | Wellways  |
| Colac Makers Space                                     | Geelong Screenprinting                                     | Pharmacy Guild of Australian (QUMAX)  | Western Victoria Primary Health Network   |
| Colac Otway Performing Arts & Cultural Centre          | Geelong United Basketball Association                      | Pixeld  | Wildlife Honey Performing Arts  |
| Commonwealth Department of Health                      | Ghanda   | Red Rock Regional Theatre and Gallery   | Wildlife Wonders  |
| Commonwealth Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet  | Give Where You Live  | RMIT  | Windana Drug & Alcohol Recovery Limited   |
| Commonwealth Department of Social Services             | Goodstart Early Learning                                   | Samsung   | Workplace Legal   |
| ConnectTel   | Greening Australia   | Sexual Assault and Family Violence Centre (SAFV)                                | Worn Gundidj  |
| Conservation and Ecology Centre                        | Head Space   | Skey Enterprises  | Yeti  |
| Corner Boxing  | Homes Victoria   | Surf Coast Shire  |   |
|  | Indigenous Land Corporation                                |   |   |

**With thanks to our major Corporate Partner, Viva Energy, who provide funding for our 22 seater Community Bus as well as providing volunteer support at our major NAIDOC events.**



# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Directors Report

The directors present their report, together with the financial statements, on the co-operative for the year ended 30 June 2025.

### Directors

The following persons were directors of the co-operative during the whole of the financial year and up to the date of this report, unless otherwise stated:

#### Wendy Brabham

(Re-elected 3 March 2024)

#### Judy Dalton-Walsh

(Re-elected 26 February 2023, re-elected 24 November 2024; Chairperson from 14 March 2023 to 12 December 2024))

#### Glenn Shea

(Elected 26 February 2023, re-elected 24 November 2024; Secretary 14 March 2023 to 12 December 2024, Treasurer from 12 December 2024)

#### Ammie Howell

(Elected 26 February 2023, retired 24 November 2024, co-opted 18 December 2024))

#### Jordan Edwards

(Elected 3 March 2024; Chairperson from 12 December 2024)

#### Charmaine Hopgood

(Elected 24 November 2024; Secretary from 12 December 2024)

#### Debby Lovett

(Elected 24 November 2024)

### Principal Activities

The establishment of the Co-operative was to create a gathering place (home) for our Community, we continue to reshape the Co-operative to be the home for our Community where they can access holistic support to strengthen their identity, Culture, health and wellbeing aspirations.

### Results for the year

The total comprehensive surplus of the Co-operative for the year was \$1,715,113 (2024 surplus - \$6,637,690). The surplus for 2025 was primarily due to an increase in the asset revaluation reserve of \$6,665 (2024 asset revaluation increase of \$3,063,766). Operational surplus increased to \$1,708,449 (2024 surplus \$3,573,924) as the organisation has continued to grow its programs and infrastructure works for the Morgan Street development continue to progress.

Total revenue of \$29,554,982 was a large increase in comparison to total revenue derived in the 2024 financial year (\$26,979,282). This was primarily due to additional grant funding that Wathaurong secured in relation to new program initiatives and the Morgan Street redevelopment. Grant funding accounted for 86% of total revenue. Trading activities contributed 11%, an increase on the previous year as Wathaurong continues to increase self-generated income.

Total expenses of \$27,846,534 represents an increase on prior year expenditure (\$23,405,358) in line with revenue growth as Wathaurong continued to grow its services.

The increase in expenses is attributable primarily to an increase in staffing costs from additional funded programs. All other operational expenses remain at similar levels to the prior year.

We would like to acknowledge and thank our Commonwealth, State and Local partners for their ongoing support that enables our self-determination to deliver many supports to our members and broader Community. Our funding partners

are:

#### Victoria:

- Department of Health
- Department of Family, Fairness and Housing
- Department of Education
- Department of Justice and Community Safety
- Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Western Victoria Primary Health Network

#### Commonwealth:

- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Department of Health and Aged Care
- National Indigenous Australians Agency

The directors (before the "Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income" and "Statement of Financial Position" were completed) took reasonable steps to ascertain what action had been taken in relation to writing off bad debts and making provisions for doubtful debts, and to cause all known bad debts to

be written off and adequate provision to be made for doubtful debts.

At the date of the report the directors were not aware of any circumstances which would render the amount written off for bad debts or the amount of the provision for doubtful debts inadequate to any substantial extent.

The directors (before the "Statement of Profit or Loss and Other Comprehensive Income" and "Statement of Financial Position" were completed) took reasonable steps to ascertain whether any current assets were unlikely to realise in the ordinary course of business their value as shown in the accounting records of the Co-operative and, if so, to cause –

- those assets to be written down to an amount which they might be expected so to realise; or
- adequate provision to be made for the difference between the amount of the value as so shown and the amount they might be expected to realise.

At the date of the report the directors are not aware of any circumstances which would render the values attributed to the current assets in the accounts misleading.

At the date of the report there does not exist:

- any charge on the assets of the Co-operative which has arisen since the end of the financial year and secures the liabilities of any other person; and
- any contingent liability which has arisen since the end of the financial year.

At the date of the report the directors are not aware of any circumstances not otherwise dealt with in the report of accounts which would render any amount stated in the accounts misleading.

The results of the Co-operative's operations during the financial year were not in the opinion of the directors, substantially affected by any item, transaction or event of a material and unusual nature.

There has not arisen in the interval between the end of the financial year and the date of the report any item, transaction or event of a material and unusual nature likely in the opinion of the directors, to affect substantially the results of the Cooperative's operations for the next succeeding financial year.

### Director's benefits

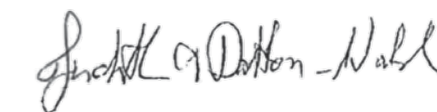
Since the end of the previous financial year, no director of the Co-operative has received or become entitled to receive a benefit (other than a benefit included in the aggregate amount of emoluments received or due and receivable by directors shown in the accounts or the fixed salary of a full-time employee of the Co-operative) by reason of a contract made by the Co-operative with the director or with a firm of which he is a member, or with a co-operative in which he has a substantial interest.

### Indemnities

The Co-operative has not, during or since the financial year, in respect of any person who is or has been an officer or auditor of the Co-operative or of a related body corporate:

- indemnified or made any relevant agreement for indemnifying against a liability, including costs and expenses in successfully defending legal proceedings; or
- paid or agreed to pay a premium in respect of a contract insuring against a liability for the costs or expenses to defend legal proceedings.

On behalf of the Directors



#### Judy Dalton-Walsh,

*Deputy Chairperson*

Signed on the 5th of November, 2025

At North Geelong

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Auditor's Independence Declaration

I declare that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, in relation to the audit of the financial year ended 30 June 2025, there have been no contraventions of:

1. the auditor independence requirements as set out in the *Co-operatives National Law (Victoria)* in relation to the audit; and
2. any applicable code of professional conduct in relation to the audit.

**LBW CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS**



**Sripathy Sarma**

*Principal*

RCA Registration Number: 325 444

Dated this 5th day of November 2025



# Statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income

For the year ended 30 June 2025

|  | Note      | 2025<br>\$        | 2024<br>\$        |
|--|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Revenue</b>                                       | <b>3</b>  | <b>29,554,982</b> | <b>26,979,282</b> |
| <b>Expenses</b>                                      |           |                   |                   |
| Employee benefits expense                            |           | (20,689,603)      | (17,640,137)      |
| Client support expense                               |           | (2,894,682)       | (1,934,908)       |
| Depreciation expense                                 | 4         | (968,850)         | (862,404)         |
| Occupancy expense                                    |           | (167,306)         | (152,090)         |
| Motor vehicle expense                                |           | (454,303)         | (356,041)         |
| Telephone & internet expense                         |           | (155,917)         | (139,140)         |
| Rental properties expense                            |           | (90,313)          | (106,718)         |
| Staff training and development expense               |           | (426,103)         | (451,818)         |
| Legal fees   |           | (151,517)         | (93,903)          |
| Other expenses from ordinary activities              |           | (1,847,940)       | (1,668,198)       |
| <b>Surplus before income tax expense</b>             |           | <b>1,708,448</b>  | <b>3,573,925</b>  |
| Income tax expense                                   |           | -                 | -                 |
| <b>Surplus after income tax expense for the year</b> | <b>15</b> | <b>1,708,448</b>  | <b>3,573,925</b>  |
| Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax  | 16        | 6,665             | 3,063,766         |
| <b>Total comprehensive income for the year</b>       |           | <b>1,715,113</b>  | <b>6,637,691</b>  |

The above statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes.

# Statement of financial position

For the year ended 30 June 2025

|                                      | Note      | 2025<br>\$        | 2024<br>\$        |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Assets</b>                        |           |                   |                   |
| <b>Current assets</b>                |           |                   |                   |
| Cash and cash equivalents            | 5         | 20,596,868        | 18,305,699        |
| Trade and other receivables          | 6         | 1,593,223         | 1,307,189         |
| Other assets                         | 7         | 127,025           | 226,838           |
| Financial assets                     |           | 5,376             | 5,376             |
| <b>Total current assets</b>          |           | <b>22,322,492</b> | <b>19,845,102</b> |
| <b>Non-current assets</b>            |           |                   |                   |
| Property, plant and equipment        | 8         | 31,401,793        | 28,330,498        |
| Right of use Assets                  | 10        | 832,881           | 1,224,269         |
| Investments                          | 9         | 262,500           | 262,500           |
| <b>Total non-current assets</b>      |           | <b>32,497,174</b> | <b>29,817,267</b> |
| <b>Total assets</b>                  |           | <b>54,819,666</b> | <b>49,662,369</b> |
| <b>Liabilities</b>                   |           |                   |                   |
| <b>Current liabilities</b>           |           |                   |                   |
| Trade and other payables             | 11        | 1,654,680         | 1,152,042         |
| Employee benefits                    | 12        | 2,157,076         | 1,823,350         |
| Grants in advance                    | 13        | 18,308,494        | 15,348,205        |
| Lease liabilities                    | 14        | 508,452           | 544,520           |
| <b>Total current liabilities</b>     |           | <b>22,628,702</b> | <b>18,868,117</b> |
| <b>Non-current liabilities</b>       |           |                   |                   |
| Lease liabilities                    | 14        | 384,463           | 746,824           |
| Employee benefits                    | 12        | 222,075           | 178,115           |
| <b>Total non-current liabilities</b> |           | <b>606,538</b>    | <b>924,939</b>    |
| <b>Total liabilities</b>             |           | <b>23,235,240</b> | <b>19,793,056</b> |
| <b>Net assets</b>                    |           | <b>31,584,426</b> | <b>29,869,313</b> |
| <b>Equity</b>                        |           |                   |                   |
| Issued capital                       |           | 72                | 72                |
| Asset revaluation reserve            | 16        | 15,618,070        | 15,611,405        |
| <b>Accumulated surplus</b>           | <b>15</b> | <b>15,966,284</b> | <b>14,257,836</b> |
| <b>Total equity</b>                  |           | <b>31,584,426</b> | <b>29,869,313</b> |

The above statement of financial position should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

# Statement of changes in equity

For the year ended 30 June 2025

|   | Issued<br>Capital<br>\$ | Asset<br>Revaluation<br>Reserve<br>\$ | Retained<br>Surpluses<br>\$ | Total equity<br>\$ |
|---|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Balance at 1 July 2023</b>                       | 72                      | 12,547,639                            | 10,683,911                  | 23,231,622         |
| Surplus after income tax expense for the year       | -                       | -                                     | 3,573,925                   | 3,573,925          |
| Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax | -                       | 3,063,766                             | -                           | 3,063,766          |
| Total comprehensive income for the year             | -                       | 3,063,766                             | 3,573,925                   | 6,637,691          |
| <b>Balance at 30 June 2024</b>                      | <b>72</b>               | <b>15,611,405</b>                     | <b>14,257,836</b>           | <b>29,869,313</b>  |
| <b>Balance at 1 July 2024</b>                       | 72                      | 15,611,405                            | 14,257,836                  | 29,869,313         |
| Surplus after income tax expense for the year       | -                       | -                                     | 1,708,448                   | 1,708,448          |
| Other comprehensive income for the year, net of tax | -                       | 6,665                                 | -                           | 6,665              |
| Total comprehensive income for the year             | -                       | 6,665                                 | 1,708,448                   | 1,715,113          |
| <b>Balance at 30 June 2025</b>                      | <b>72</b>               | <b>15,618,070</b>                     | <b>15,966,284</b>           | <b>31,584,426</b>  |

The above statement of changes in equity should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

# Statement of Cash Flows

For the year ended 30 June 2025

|  | Note      | 2025<br>\$         | 2024<br>\$         |
|--|-----------|--------------------|--------------------|
| <b>Cash flows from operating activities</b>                      |           |                    |                    |
| Receipts from grants & other                                     |           | 31,601,273         | 33,144,555         |
| Payments to suppliers and employees                              |           | <b>-25,817,068</b> | <b>-22,352,567</b> |
| Interest received  |           | 636,212            | 221,611            |
| Interest paid  |           | <b>1,708</b>       | -                  |
| <b>Net cash from operating activities</b>                        | <b>18</b> | <b>6,422,124</b>   | <b>11,013,599</b>  |
| <b>Cash flows from investing activities</b>                      |           |                    |                    |
| Proceeds for property, plant and equipment                       |           | -                  | 142,875            |
| Payments for property, plant and equipment                       |           | -3,489,310         | -3,927,600         |
| <b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>                     |           | <b>-3,489,310</b>  | <b>-3,784,725</b>  |
| <b>Cash flows from financing activities</b>                      |           |                    |                    |
| Repayment of lease liabilities                                   |           | <b>-641,645</b>    | <b>-574,740</b>    |
| <b>Net cash used in investing activities</b>                     |           | <b>-641,645</b>    | <b>-574,740</b>    |
| Net increase in cash and cash equivalents                        |           | 2,291,169          | 6,654,134          |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the financial year |           | <b>18,305,699</b>  | <b>11,651,565</b>  |
| Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the financial year       | 5         | <b>20,596,868</b>  | <b>18,305,699</b>  |

The above statement of cash flows should be read in conjunction with the accompanying notes

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 1. Material accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted in the preparation of the financial statements are set out below. These policies have been consistently applied to all the years presented, unless otherwise stated.

## Basis of preparation

In the directors' opinion, the co-operative is not a reporting entity because there are no users dependent on general purpose financial statements.

These are special purpose financial statements that have been prepared for the purposes of complying with the requirements of the Co-operatives National Law 2013 and Australian Accounting Standards and the significant accounting policies disclosed below. The directors have determined that the accounting policies adopted are appropriate to meet the needs of the members of the Co-operative.

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with the recognition and measurement requirements specified by the Australian Accounting Standards and Interpretations issued by the Australian Accounting Standards Board ('AASB') and the disclosure requirements of AASB 101 'Presentation of Financial Statements', AASB 107 'Statement of Cash Flows', AASB 108 'Accounting Policies, Changes in Accounting Estimates and Errors', AASB 1048 'Interpretation of Standards' and AASB 1054 'Australian Additional Disclosures', as appropriate for not-for-profit oriented entities.

## Historical cost convention

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

## Critical accounting estimates

The preparation of the financial statements requires the use of certain critical accounting estimates. It also requires management to exercise its judgement in the process of applying the co-operative's accounting policies. The areas involving a higher degree of judgement or complexity, or areas where assumptions and estimates are significant to the financial statements, are disclosed in note 2.

## Revenue recognition

The co-operative recognises revenue as follows:

### Revenue from contracts with customers

Revenue is recognised at an amount that reflects the consideration to which the co-operative is expected to be entitled in exchange for transferring goods or services to a customer. For each contract with a customer, the co-operative: identifies the contract with a customer; identifies the performance obligations in the contract; determines the transaction price which takes into account estimates of variable consideration and the time value of money; allocates the transaction price to the separate performance obligations on the basis of the relative stand-alone selling price of each distinct good or service to be delivered; and recognises revenue when or as each performance obligation is satisfied in a manner that depicts the transfer to the customer of the goods or services promised.

Variable consideration within the transaction price, if any, reflects concessions provided to the customer such as discounts, rebates and refunds, any potential bonuses receivable from the customer and any other contingent events. Such estimates are determined using either the 'expected value' or 'most likely amount' method. The measurement of variable consideration is subject to a constraining principle whereby revenue will only be recognised to the extent that it is highly probable that a significant reversal in the amount of cumulative revenue recognised will not occur. The measurement constraint continues until the uncertainty associated with the variable consideration is subsequently resolved. Amounts received that are subject to the constraining principle are recognised as a refund liability.

### Sales revenue

Events, fundraising and raffles are recognised when received or receivable.

### Donations

Donations are recognised at the time the pledge is made.

### Grants

Grant revenue is recognised in profit or loss when the co-operative satisfies the performance obligations stated within the funding agreements.

If conditions are attached to the grant which must be satisfied before the co-operative is eligible to retain the contribution, the grant will be recognised in the statement of financial position as a liability until those conditions are satisfied.

# Notes to the financial statements

## For the year ended 30 June 2025

### **Interest**

Interest revenue is recognised as interest accrues using the effective interest method. This is a method of calculating the amortised cost of a financial asset and allocating the interest income over the relevant period using the effective interest rate, which is the rate that exactly discounts estimated future cash receipts through the expected life of the financial asset to the net carrying amount of the financial asset.

### **Other revenue**

Other revenue is recognised when it is received or when the right to receive payment is established.

### **Income tax**

As the co-operative is a charitable institution in terms of subsection 50-5 of the Income Tax Assessment Act 1997, as amended, it is exempt from paying income tax.

### **Current and non-current classification**

Assets and liabilities are presented in the statement of financial position based on current and non-current classification.

An asset is classified as current when: it is either expected to be realised or intended to be sold or consumed in the co-operative's normal operating cycle; it is held primarily for the purpose of trading; it is expected to be realised within 12 months after the reporting period; or the asset is cash or cash equivalent unless restricted from being exchanged or used to settle a liability for at least 12

months after the reporting period. All other assets are classified as non-current.

A liability is classified as current when: it is either expected to be settled in the co-operative's normal operating cycle; it is held primarily for the purpose of trading; it is due to be settled within 12 months after the reporting period; or there is no unconditional right to defer the settlement of the liability for at least 12 months after the reporting period. All other liabilities are classified as non-current.

### **Cash and cash equivalents**

Cash and cash equivalents includes cash on hand, deposits held at call with financial institutions, other short-term, highly liquid investments with original maturities of three months or less that are readily convertible to known amounts of cash and which are subject to an insignificant risk of changes in value.

### **Trade and other receivables**

Other receivables are recognised at amortised cost, less any allowance for expected credit losses.

### **Property, plant and equipment**

Plant and equipment is stated at historical cost less accumulated depreciation and impairment. Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to the acquisition of the items.

Depreciation is calculated on a straight-line basis to write off the net cost of each item of property, plant and

equipment (excluding land) over their expected useful live. The depreciation rates used are:

|                            |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| <b>Buildings</b>           | <b>2.5%</b>   |
| <b>Plant and equipment</b> | <b>10-50%</b> |
| <b>Motor vehicles</b>      | <b>20-25%</b> |

The residual values, useful lives and depreciation methods are reviewed, and adjusted if appropriate, at each reporting date.

An item of property, plant and equipment is derecognised upon disposal or when there is no future economic benefit to the co-operative. Gains and losses between the carrying amount and the disposal proceeds are taken to profit or loss.

### **Land and Buildings - revaluation**

Increases in carrying amount arising on revaluation of land and buildings are credited to a revaluation reserve in equity. Decreases that offset previous increases of the same asset are charged against fair value reserves directly in equity, all other decreases are charged to the income statement. Each year the difference between depreciation based on the revalued carrying amount of the assets charged to the income statement and depreciation based on the asset's original cost is transferred from the revaluation reserve to retained earnings.

### **Property**

Freehold land and buildings are shown at their fair value (being the amount for which an assets could be exchanged between knowledgeable willing parities in an arm's length transaction), based on periodic valuations by external independent valuers.

### **Impairment of non-financial assets**

Non-financial assets are reviewed for impairment whenever events or changes in circumstances indicate that the carrying amount may not be recoverable. An impairment loss is recognised for the amount by which the asset's carrying amount exceeds its recoverable amount.

Recoverable amount is the higher of an asset's fair value less costs of disposal and value-in-use. The value-in-use is the present value of the estimated future cash flows relating to the asset using a pre-tax discount rate specific to the asset or cash-generating unit to which the asset belongs. Assets that do not have independent cash flows are grouped together to form a cash-generating unit.

### **Trade and other payables**

These amounts represent liabilities for goods and services provided to the co-operative prior to the end of the financial year and which are unpaid. Due to their short-term nature they are measured at amortised cost and are not discounted. The amounts are unsecured and are usually paid within 30 days of recognition.

### **Employee benefits**

#### **Short-term employee benefits**

Liabilities for wages and salaries, including non-monetary benefits, annual leave and long service leave expected to be settled wholly within 12 months of the reporting date are measured at the amounts expected to be paid when the liabilities are settled.

#### **Other long-term employee benefits**

The liability for annual leave and long service leave not expected to be settled within 12 months of the reporting date are measured at the present value of expected future payments to be made in respect of services provided by employees up to the reporting date using the projected unit credit method. Consideration is given to expected future wage and salary levels, experience of employee departures and periods of service. Expected future payments are discounted using market yields at the reporting date on national government bonds with terms to maturity and currency that match, as closely as possible, the estimated future cash outflows.

### **Fair value measurement**

When an asset or liability, financial or non-financial, is measured at fair value for recognition or disclosure purposes, the fair value is based on the price that would be received to sell an asset or paid to transfer a liability in an orderly transaction between market participants at the measurement date; and assumes that the transaction will take place either: in the principal market; or in the absence of a principal market, in the most advantageous market.

Fair value is measured using the assumptions that market participants would use when pricing the asset or liability, assuming they act in their economic best interests. For non-financial assets, the fair value measurement is based on its highest and best use. Valuation techniques that are appropriate in the circumstances and for which sufficient data are available to measure fair value, are used, maximising the use of relevant observable inputs and minimising the use of unobservable inputs.

### **Goods and Services Tax ('GST') and other similar taxes**

Revenues, expenses and assets are recognised net of the amount of associated GST, unless the GST incurred is not recoverable from the tax authority. In this case it is recognised as part of the cost of the acquisition of the asset or as part of the expense.

Receivables and payables are stated inclusive of the amount of GST receivable or payable. The net amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the tax authority is included in other receivables or other payables in the statement of financial position.

Cash flows are presented on a gross basis. The GST components of cash flows arising from investing or financing activities which are recoverable from, or payable to the tax authority, are presented as operating cash flows.

Commitments and contingencies are disclosed net of the amount of GST recoverable from, or payable to, the tax authority.

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 2. Critical accounting judgements, estimates and assumptions

The preparation of the financial statements requires management to make judgements, estimates and assumptions that affect the reported amounts in the financial statements. Management continually evaluates its judgements and estimates in relation to assets, liabilities, contingent liabilities, revenue and expenses. Management bases its judgements, estimates and assumptions on historical experience and on other various factors, including expectations of future events, management believes to be reasonable under the circumstances. The resulting accounting judgements and estimates will seldom equal the related actual results. The judgements, estimates and assumptions that have a significant risk of causing a material adjustment to the carrying amounts of assets and liabilities (refer to the respective notes) within the next financial year are discussed below.

### Performance obligations under AASB 15

To identify a performance obligation under AASB 15, the promise must be sufficiently specific to be able to determine when the obligation is satisfied. Management exercises judgement to determine whether the promise is sufficiently specific by taking into account any conditions specified in the arrangement, explicit or implicit, regarding the promised goods or services. In making this assessment, management includes the nature/ type, cost/ value, quantity and the period of transfer related to the goods or services promised.

### Estimation of useful lives of assets

The co-operative determines the estimated useful lives and related depreciation and amortisation charges for its property, plant and equipment and finite life intangible assets. The useful lives could change significantly as a result of technical innovations or some other event. The depreciation and amortisation charge will increase where the useful lives are less than previously estimated lives, or technically obsolete or non-strategic assets that have been abandoned or sold will be written off or written down.

### Impairment of non-financial assets other than goodwill and other indefinite life intangible assets

The co-operative assesses impairment of non-financial assets other than goodwill and other indefinite life intangible assets at each reporting date by evaluating conditions specific to the co-operative and to the particular asset that may lead to impairment. If an impairment trigger exists, the recoverable amount of the asset is determined. This involves fair value less costs of disposal or value-in-use calculations, which incorporate a number of key estimates and assumptions.

### Lease term and Option to Extend under AASB 16

The lease term is defined as the non-cancellable period of a lease together with both periods covered by an option to extend the lease if the lessee is reasonably certain to exercise that option; and also periods covered by an option to terminate the lease if the lessee is reasonably certain not to exercise that option. The options that are reasonably going to be exercised is a key management judgement that the entity will make. The entity determines the likelihood to exercise the options on a lease-by-lease basis looking at various factors such as which assets are strategic and which are key to future strategy of the entity.

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 3. Revenue

|                                  | 2025<br>\$        | 2024<br>\$        |
|----------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Operating revenue</b>         |                   |                   |
| Grants & government funding      | 24,077,388        | 22,746,476        |
| Fundraising & trading activities | 4,575,236         | 3,593,900         |
| Rental income                    | 187,276           | 199,962           |
| Other funding and sundry income  | 78,870            | 217,333           |
|                                  | <b>28,918,770</b> | <b>26,757,671</b> |
| <b>Other revenue</b>             |                   |                   |
| Interest received                | 636,212           | 221,611           |
| <b>Revenue</b>                   | <b>29,554,982</b> | <b>26,979,282</b> |

## Note 4. Expenses

|   | 2025<br>\$    | 2024<br>\$    |
|---|---------------|---------------|
| Surplus before income tax includes the following specific expenses: |               |               |
| Depreciation of property, plant & equipment & right of use assets   | 968,850       | 862,404       |
| Computer & IT expenses  | 439,759       | 558,384       |
| Gain/(loss) on sale & disposal of assets                            | <b>-8,247</b> | <b>48,017</b> |

## Note 5. Current assets - cash and cash equivalents

|              | 2025<br>\$        | 2024<br>\$        |
|--------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Cash on hand | 200               | 200               |
| Cash at bank | 20,596,668        | 18,305,499        |
|              | <b>20,596,868</b> | <b>18,305,699</b> |

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 6. Current assets - trade and other receivables

|                                       | 2025<br>\$       | 2024<br>\$       |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Trade & Rental debtors                | 1,155,549        | 1,248,993        |
| Loan - Wathaurong Cultural Centre Ltd | 369,735          | -                |
| Loan receivable - Kirrae Whurrong     | 67,939           | 58,196           |
|                                       | <b>1,593,223</b> | <b>1,307,189</b> |

## Note 7. Current assets - other

|              | 2025<br>\$     | 2024<br>\$     |
|--------------|----------------|----------------|
| Rental bonds | 82,083         | 85,197         |
| Prepayments  | 44,942         | 141,641        |
|              | <b>127,025</b> | <b>226,838</b> |

## Note 8. Non-current assets - property, plant and equipment

|  | 2025<br>\$       | 2024<br>\$       |
|--|------------------|------------------|
| Freehold buildings                     |                  |                  |
| - Admin Building (2019 valuation)      | 430,000          | 430,000          |
| - Children's Services (2019 valuation) | 418,000          | 418,000          |
| - Health Services (2019 valuation)     | 1,112,830        | 1,112,830        |
| - Forster St (2024 valuation)          | 800,000          | 800,000          |
| - Rodney Road (2023 valuation)         | 200,000          | 200,000          |
| - Barry Street (2025 valuation)        | 45,000           | -                |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation         | -176,381         | -149,371         |
|  | <b>2,829,449</b> | <b>2,811,459</b> |

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 8. Non-current assets - property, plant and equipment (Continued)

|  | 2025<br>\$        | 2024<br>\$        |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Health service car park - at cost            | 327,485           | 327,485           |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation               | -131,976          | -123,789          |
|  | <b>195,509</b>    | <b>203,696</b>    |
| Land   |                   |                   |
| - Forster Street (2024 valuation)            | 550,000           | 550,000           |
| - Surrey Street (2023 valuation)             | 835,000           | 835,000           |
| - 62 Morgan Street (2019 valuation)          | 860,000           | 860,000           |
| - Wurdi Youang (2024 valuation)              | 5,725,000         | 5,725,000         |
| - Rodney Road (2023 valuation)               | 750,000           | 750,000           |
| - Barry Street (2025 valuation)              | 385,000           | -                 |
| - Rental Properties at Valuation             | 7,735,000         | 7,735,000         |
|  | <b>16,840,000</b> | <b>16,455,000</b> |
| Rental properties                            |                   |                   |
| - Buildings - Rental properties at valuation | 3,126,024         | 3,075,000         |
| - Rental Improvements                        | 18,956            | 69,980            |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation               | -47,488           | -24,288           |
|  | <b>3,097,492</b>  | <b>3,120,692</b>  |
| Furniture & fittings - at cost               | 59,647            | 56,213            |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation               | -45,647           | -42,910           |
|  | <b>14,000</b>     | <b>13,303</b>     |
| Office furniture and equipment - at cost     | 727,449           | 704,437           |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation               | -487,089          | -422,113          |
|  | <b>240,360</b>    | <b>282,324</b>    |
| Motor vehicles - at cost                     | 2,685,120         | 2,002,828         |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation               | -876,293          | -779,069          |
|  | <b>1,808,827</b>  | <b>1,223,759</b>  |
| Children's service equipment - at cost       | 35,678            | 35,678            |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation               | -29,967           | -29,572           |
|  | <b>5,712</b>      | <b>6,106</b>      |

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 8. Non-current assets - property, plant and equipment (Continued)

|                                    | 2025<br>\$        | 2024<br>\$        |
|------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Wurdi Youang Equipment - at cost   | 119,183           | 93,943            |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation     | -65,469           | -61,128           |
|                                    | <b>53,714</b>     | <b>32,815</b>     |
| Health service equipment - at cost | 210,970           | 210,970           |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation     | -170,849          | -168,793          |
|                                    | <b>40,121</b>     | <b>42,177</b>     |
| Factory fit out - at cost          | 102,416           | 112,416           |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation     | -79,882           | -79,800           |
|                                    | <b>22,534</b>     | <b>32,616</b>     |
| Mackey St fit out - at cost        | 546,747           | 546,747           |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation     | -301,654          | -272,051          |
|                                    | <b>245,093</b>    | <b>274,696</b>    |
| Karroong Kanyool fit out - at cost | 2,370,973         | 2,365,849         |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation     | -52,454           | -11,683           |
|                                    | <b>2,318,519</b>  | <b>2,354,166</b>  |
| Boon Boon fit out - at cost        | 103,497           | -                 |
| Less: Accumulated depreciation     | -253              | -                 |
|                                    | <b>103,244</b>    | -                 |
| Work in progress                   | 3,587,218         | 1,477,689         |
|                                    | <b>31,401,793</b> | <b>28,330,498</b> |

## Note 9. Investments

|  | 2025<br>\$     | 2024<br>\$     |
|--|----------------|----------------|
| Investment in 87-91 Gellibrand St Colac                  |                |                |
| - Investment in Land and Building (Directors' Valuation) | 525,000        | 525,000        |
| - Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative's share             | 50%            | 50%            |
|  | <b>262,500</b> | <b>262,500</b> |

The investment in Wathaurong Glass Pty. Ltd. has not been brought to account in the financial statements of Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative Limited.

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 10. Right of Use Assets

|                                | 2025<br>\$     | 2024<br>\$       |
|--------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Equipment                      | 186,586        | 226,853          |
| Property                       | 1,767,251      | 1,901,580        |
| Less: Accumulated Depreciation | -1,120,957     | -904,164         |
|                                | <b>832,881</b> | <b>1,224,269</b> |

## Note 11. Current liabilities - trade and other payables

|                | 2025<br>\$       | 2024<br>\$       |
|----------------|------------------|------------------|
| Trade payables | 713,738          | 220,691          |
| Other payables | 940,942          | 931,351          |
|                | <b>1,654,680</b> | <b>1,152,042</b> |

## Note 12. Current liabilities - employee benefits

|                              | 2025<br>\$       | 2024<br>\$       |
|------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>Current</b>               | \$               | \$               |
| Annual Leave Provisions      | 1,781,748        | 1,465,195        |
| Long Service Leave Provision | 375,328          | 358,155          |
|                              | <b>2,157,076</b> | <b>1,823,350</b> |
| <b>Non-Current</b>           |                  |                  |
| Long Service Leave Provision | <b>222,075</b>   | <b>178,115</b>   |

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 13. Grants in advance

|                     | 2025<br>\$        | 2024<br>\$        |
|---------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Unspent grant funds | 18,308,494        | 15,348,205        |
|                     | <b>18,308,494</b> | <b>15,348,205</b> |

## Note 14. Lease Liabilities

|                    | 2025<br>\$     | 2024<br>\$       |
|--------------------|----------------|------------------|
| <b>Current</b>     |                |                  |
| Equipment          | 30,404         | 30,850           |
| Property           | 478,048        | 513,670          |
|                    | <b>508,452</b> | <b>544,520</b>   |
| <b>Non-current</b> |                |                  |
| Equipment          | 144,555        | -                |
| Property           | 239,908        | 746,824          |
|                    | 384,463        | 746,824          |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>892,915</b> | <b>1,291,344</b> |

## Note 15. Equity - retained surpluses

|   | 2025<br>\$        | 2024<br>\$        |
|---|-------------------|-------------------|
| Retained surpluses at the beginning of the financial year | 14,257,836        | 10,683,911        |
| Surplus for the year                                      | 1,708,448         | 3,573,925         |
| Retained surpluses at the end of the financial year       | <b>15,966,284</b> | <b>14,257,836</b> |

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 16. Equity - Asset revaluation reserve

|  | 2025<br>\$        | 2024<br>\$        |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|
| Asset revaluation reserve at the beginning of the financial year | 15,611,405        | 12,547,639        |
| Movement in asset revaluation reserve                            | 6,665             | 3,063,766         |
| Asset revaluation reserve at the end of the financial year       | <b>15,618,070</b> | <b>15,611,405</b> |

## Note 17. Events after the reporting period

No matter or circumstance has arisen since 30 June 2025 that has significantly affected, or may significantly affect the co-operative's operations, the results of those operations, or the co-operative's state of affairs in future financial years.

## Note 18. Reconciliation of surplus after income tax to net cash from operating activities

|  | 2025<br>\$       | 2024<br>\$        |
|--|------------------|-------------------|
| Operating profit for the year                      | 1,708,448        | 3,573,925         |
| Adjustments for:                                   |                  |                   |
| Depreciation and amortisation                      | 968,850          | 862,404           |
| (Profit)/loss on sale & disposal of assets         | 8,247            | -48,017           |
| Lease liability - finance costs                    | 82,187           | 52,289            |
| Change in operating assets and liabilities:        |                  |                   |
| Decrease/(increase) in trade and other receivables | -286,034         | -447,825          |
| Decrease/(increase) in other assets                | 99,813           | -141,641          |
| Decrease/(increase) in financial assets            | -                | 1,100,153         |
| (Decrease)/increase in trade and other payables    | 502,638          | 227,044           |
| (Decrease)/increase in grants in advance           | 2,960,289        | 5,782,573         |
| (Decrease)/increase in employee benefits           | 377,686          | 52,694            |
| Net cash from operating activities                 | <b>6,422,124</b> | <b>11,013,599</b> |

# Notes to the financial statements

For the year ended 30 June 2025

## Note 19. Key management personnel disclosures

### Compensation

The aggregate compensation made to directors and other members of key management personnel of the corporation is set out below:

|                        | 2025<br>\$ | 2024<br>\$ |
|------------------------|------------|------------|
| Aggregate compensation | 505,000    | 286,832    |

## Note 20. Related party transactions

### Key management personnel

Disclosures relating to key management personnel are set out in note 19.

### Transactions with related parties

Wathaurong Cultural Centre was established during the year and consists of Directors that were employees of Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative. Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative and Wathaurong Cultural Centre exchanged services in the 2025 financial year.

### Receivable from and payable to related parties

There were no trade receivables from or trade payables to related parties at the current and previous reporting date.

### Loans to/from related parties

A loan of \$369,734 was provided to Wathaurong Cultural Centre as establishment funds and this amount is reflected as an asset on the balance sheet.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

## Directors Declaration

### Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Limited

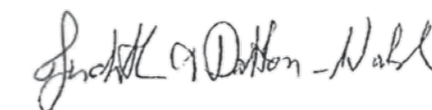
I, Judy Dalton Walsh being the director of the above mentioned Co-operative limited, state that in our opinion:

1. the financial statements and notes of the Co-operative are in accordance with the Co-operatives National Law (Victoria), including:
  - giving a true and fair view of the Co-operative's financial position as 30 June 2025 and of its performance for the year ended on that date; and
  - complying with Australian Accounting Standards (including the Australian Accounting Interpretations) and the Regulations.
2. there are reasonable grounds to believe that the Co-operative will be able to pay its debts as and when they become due and payable.

Signed in accordance with a resolution of the directors made pursuant to section 273(5)(a) of Co-operatives National Law (Victoria).

Declared at North Geelong, on 5 November 2025

On behalf of the board



**Judy Dalton-Walsh**  
Deputy Chairperson



# INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT

## To the Directors of Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-Operative Limited

### Report on the Audit of the Financial Report

#### Opinion

We have audited the financial report of Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Limited (the co-operative), which comprises the statement of financial position as at 30 June 2025, the statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income, statement of changes in equity and statement of cash flows for the year then ended, and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of material accounting policies, and the directors' declaration.

In our opinion, the accompanying financial report of Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Limited has been prepared in accordance with the provisions of the *Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013* (Victoria), including:

- (i) giving a true and fair view of the co-operative's financial position as at 30 June 2025 and of its financial performance for the year then ended; and
- (ii) that the financial records kept by the co-operative are such as to enable financial statements to be prepared in accordance with accounting policies described in Note 1.

#### Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with Australian Auditing Standards. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the *Auditor's*

*Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report* section of our report. We are independent of the co-operative in accordance with the ethical requirements of the Accounting Professional and Ethical Standards Board's APES 110: *Code of Ethics for Professional Accountants* (the Code) that are relevant to our audit of the financial report in Australia. We have also fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the Code.

We confirm that the independence declaration required by the *Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013*, which has been given to the directors of Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative Limited, would be in the same terms if given to the directors as at the time of this auditor's report.

We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

#### Emphasis of Matter - Basis of Accounting

We draw attention to Note 1 to the financial report, which describes the basis of accounting. The financial report has been prepared for the purpose of fulfilling the co-operative's financial reporting responsibilities under the *Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013* (Victoria). As a result, the financial report may not be suitable for another purpose. Our opinion is not modified in respect of this matter.

#### Responsibilities of the Directors for the Financial Report

The directors of the co-operative are responsible for the preparation of the financial report that gives a true and fair view and have determined that the basis of preparation described in Note 1 to the financial report is appropriate to meet the requirements of the *Co-operatives National Law Application Act 2013* (Victoria) and is appropriate to meet the needs of the members. The directors' responsibility also includes such internal control as the directors determine is necessary to enable the preparation of a financial report that gives a true and fair view and is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial report, the directors are responsible for assessing the co-operative's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters relating to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the directors either intend to liquidate the co-operative or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

The directors are responsible for overseeing the co-operative's financial reporting process.

#### Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Report

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial report as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of this financial report.

As part of an audit in accordance with the Australian Auditing Standards, we exercise professional judgement and maintain professional scepticism throughout the audit. We also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial report, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that

are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the co-operative's internal control.

- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the directors.
  - Conclude on the appropriateness of the directors' use of the going concern basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the co-operative's ability to continue as a going concern. If we conclude that a material uncertainty exists, we are required to draw attention in our auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial report or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify our opinion. Our conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of our auditor's report. However, future events or conditions may cause the co-operative to cease to continue as a going concern.
  - Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial report, including the disclosures, and whether the financial report represents the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- We communicate with the directors regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal control that we identify during our audit.

#### LBW CHARTERED ACCOUNTANTS



**Sripathy Sarma**

*Principal*

RCA Registration Number: 325 444

Dated this day of December 2025



## Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative

10-12 Albert Street, Geelong West, VIC 3218

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