Engaging Indigenous Communities
Snapshot 2015/16

REGIONAL INDIGENOUS FACILITATOR

The Port Phillip & Westernport CMA employs a Regional Indigenous Facilitator funded through the Australian Government’s National Landcare Programme. The Regional Indigenous Facilitation Project aims to increase the capacity of Indigenous people and organisations to participate in natural resource management planning and activity at local and regional scales. The project is currently contracted to continue until 2018.

In 2015/16, the Facilitator arranged events and activities to improve the Indigenous cultural awareness and understanding of Board members and staff from the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA and people from other organisations and community groups. The Facilitator worked directly with Indigenous organisations and communities to document their goals and aspirations in natural resource management and agriculture.

In June 2016, a partnership agreement was signed between the CEO and Chair of the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA and representatives from the Wathaurung Aboriginal Co-operative. The agreement confirms our commitment to working towards their stated goals and aspirations for participation in natural resource management and sustainable agriculture.

IMPROVING CULTURAL AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING

Events and activities undertaken in 2015/16 to improve the Indigenous cultural understanding of people from the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA and various other organisations included:

- A cultural heritage and cultural awareness forum arranged in collaboration with Wyndham City Council and hosted by Wadawurrung Elders. The forum created partnerships between public and private land managers and Traditional Owners on Wadawurrung country.
- An event to celebrate the work completed by Wurundjeri’s land management team on land managed by Parks Victoria. The event was also a celebration of Wurundjeri culture and involved a traditional bark removal practice and demonstration of the use of an eel trap on the Yarra River.
- A cultural competency day for women on the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA staff. Boon Wurrung elder, Aunty Carolyn Briggs, shared cultural traditions and traditional and contemporary roles for women within the Boon Wurrung community.
- A workshop to bring Indigenous fire management practices into consideration when planning prescribed burns. Wurundjeri elders met with land management organisation staff from Melbourne Water, the Department of Environment, Land, Water & Planning, Federation University, the Merri Creek Management Committee and the Country Fire Authority.
- A field day for members of the Wurundjeri community on plant identification in the murnong grasslands and to develop a co-ordinated and sustainable approach to murnong management.
- Shorebird and Wetland Conservation Training for Indigenous people to improve vocational skills and knowledge. This training was provided as part of the PPWCMA’s Ramsar Protection Program.

LOOKING AHEAD

The Regional Indigenous Facilitator role and associated activities will continue in 2016/17 and 2017/18 with funding through the Australian Government’s National Landcare Programme.
CASE STUDY - SUPPORTING WURUNDJERI TO ENGAGE WITH COUNTRY

On a cool and wet morning in 2015, approximately 50 people gathered at Launching Waters on the Yarra River to celebrate the work of Wurundjeri’s land management team at the site managed by Parks Victoria.

The team, led by Uncle David Wandin, have been working on the site over the past two years in partnership with Acacia Environmental and Parks Victoria’s Cam Beardsall, with funds from the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA and the Victorian State Government. Works included the removal of invasive weeds, revegetation and the restoration of the site as a culturally significant place.

In a culturally rich setting, members of three Wurundjeri families took part in a traditional bark removal practice, allowing for traditional and contemporary cultures to combine. The Jindi Worraback Dancers then performed with great pride, before a Welcome to Country was given by Uncle Perry Wandin. Attendees were then treated to a tour of the recent plantings of rare and threatened plant species of cultural significance adjacent to the Yarra River, before being shown an eel trap with technical and cultural commentary from Uncle David Wandin and Cam Beardsall.

The Wurundjeri community have become heavily involved in a range of activities which are helping them achieve their goals and aspirations for Narap (land) management. This activity is one of many that demonstrate the strength of the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA’s relationship with Indigenous communities.

CASE STUDY - CULTURAL AWARENESS DAY WITH WADAWURRUNG

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners hosted a cultural heritage and cultural awareness forum arranged through collaboration between Wyndham City Council and the Port Phillip & Westernport CMA.

The forum was attended by 36 participants from a range of organisations, including Melbourne Water, Moorabool and Parwan Valley Landcare Networks, City West Water and Wyndham City Council and aimed to create partnerships between Crown and private land managers working on Wadawurrung country and Traditional Owners.

Hosted by Uncle Byron Powell and Tammy Gilson, the day involved cultural awareness training and discussion on how to manage cultural heritage within their organisations. The Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria then provided information on the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 and how this can apply to planning and environmental projects.

By providing information and links between Traditional Owners, the Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation and partner organisations, it is anticipated that attendees will have the knowledge to consider cultural heritage when planning and undertaking projects onsite.