

First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan 2026–2029



We acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria's land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and deep spiritual connection to it.

We honour Elders past and present whose knowledge and wisdom has ensured the continuation of culture and traditional practices.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action is committed to genuinely partnering with Victorian Traditional Owners and Victoria's Aboriginal community to progress their aspirations.

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Minister Foreword

I acknowledge and respect Victorian Traditional Owners as the original custodians of Victoria’s land and waters, their unique ability to care for Country and their deep spiritual connection to it. I acknowledge that sovereignty has never been ceded.

I pay my deep respects to Elders past and present, and to the knowledge holders and leaders who have advocated tirelessly across generations for better outcomes for First Peoples and for land justice.

Victoria is leading the nation’s transition to renewable energy. In 2025, 44.6% of our state’s electricity came from renewables, not only achieving, but exceeding Victoria’s 2025 renewable electricity generation target of 40%.

And now we have our eyes firmly set on achieving our target of 65% renewable electricity generation by 2030 and 95% by 2035 as we build a clean energy system that is better for our environment, cheaper, more reliable and more resilient.

As we undertake this once-in-a-generation transformation, the Victorian Government is committed to ensuring Traditional Owners are genuine partners in Victoria’s renewable energy journey.

As coal-fired power stations retire, the State will continue to advance wind, solar and storage infrastructure to support a modern, diversified energy grid. This transition is creating thousands of jobs, supporting regional communities in close collaboration with Traditional Owners, helping to future-proof Victoria’s energy network. And crucially, our record investment in renewable energy is pushing power prices down, helping all Victorians with the cost of living.

The Victorian Government is taking active steps to support Traditional Owner self-determination and participation in the energy transition. Through partnerships, engagement and investment across renewable energy and important environmental initiatives, we are working to ensure Traditional Owners have greater opportunities to shape projects on Country, protect cultural heritage and pursue economic aspirations connected to land and Sea Country.

It is widely recognised that caring for and managing Country strengthens individual and collective identity, promotes resilience and empowerment, and delivers better outcomes for First Peoples communities.

The First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan was co-designed with Traditional Owners to help guide Victoria’s path toward a renewable energy future that is fair, inclusive and grounded in self-determination. We acknowledge there is still more work to do - this Strategic Plan represents a significant step forward.

We are committed to strengthening partnerships with Traditional Owners across the State to support the protection of Country and Sea Country, the continuation of spiritual and cultural practices, and the achievement of present and future aspirations.

Together, we have an opportunity to ensure Victoria’s renewable energy transition delivers lasting benefits for current and future generations, with First Peoples at the forefront of this important work.

Thank you.



The Hon. Lily D’Ambrosio MP

Minister for Energy and Resources
Minister for Climate Action
Minister for the State Electricity Commission

Executive Summary

The co-designed First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan (Strategic Plan) embeds the aspirations of Victorian Traditional Owner's into the renewable energy transition. The Strategic Plan provides an accountable pathway for government, industry and communities to collectively transform how renewable energy is planned, delivered and governed on Country.

From 2024–2026, formally recognised Traditional Owner Corporations across Victoria contributed through on-Country meetings, interviews, workshops, a two-day forum and written submissions. Their voices, priorities and aspirations shape the entire Strategic Plan. The result is a holistic and practical roadmap designed to uphold cultural authority, strengthen economic participation, protect Country and enhance community wellbeing. This Strategic Plan is designed to be a living and adaptive framework to align to Gellung Warl and the Statewide Treaty expectations.

The Strategic Plan delivers five Strategic Goals:

Goal 1

Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement

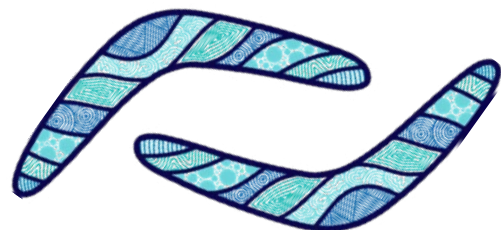
Establishes transparent, culturally grounded processes that ensure Traditional Owners and Gellung Warl can meaningfully influence renewable energy projects from the earliest stages. It strengthens legal and policy settings, embeds Indigenous Data Sovereignty, and ensures developers engage in fair and respectful partnerships.



Goal 2

Economic Independence and Fair Value Sharing

Supports Traditional Owners to pursue clean energy ownership, joint ventures, procurement pathways and employment opportunities. It also defines expectations for value-sharing approaches that are co-designed, legally supported and aligned with local priorities, enabling long-term economic empowerment.



Goal 3

Affordable, Reliable and Fair Energy Access

Addresses systemic energy inequities and supports community-led renewable energy solutions. The aim is to increase energy security, reduce household energy costs, and ensure First Peoples have access to culturally appropriate information, services and programs.



Goal 4

Caring for Country

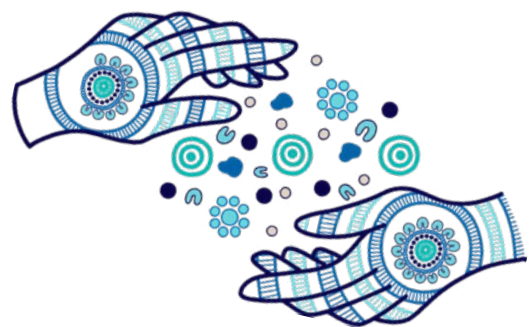
Traditional Owners are respected for their cultural expertise in land management. Government and Renewable Energy Developers work in partnership with Traditional owners to ensure renewable energy development protects and minimises harm to Country throughout the entirety of the project life cycle.



Goal 5

Strengthening Knowledge and Capacity Building

Invests in culturally grounded tools, resources and workforce pathways to support First Peoples leadership in partnership with Traditional Owners and Gellung Warl across the renewable energy sector. It builds technical capability, supports informed decision-making, and expands opportunities for education, training and long-term careers.



Together, these goals establish a future in which Traditional Owners and Gellung Warl are partners in the renewable energy transition, ensuring benefits endure for Country, community, culture and future generations. Moving into implementation from 2026 to 2029, the Strategic Plan represents a commitment to genuine partnership, truth-telling, accountability and shared progress toward a cleaner, fairer and self-determined energy future.

“

‘My commitment to First Peoples self-determination also reflects my personal and heartfelt acknowledgment of the devastating intergenerational consequences of the dispossession of First Peoples of and from their Country. This dispossession has had destructive effects on culture, including cultural practices, language and the important responsibility to connect with and care for Country. It has also upset the important balances between First Peoples and their traditional Country. I acknowledge that these consequences are a direct result of colonisation, and the establishment of the State of Victoria...’

– Hon Lily D’Ambrosio¹



Context

The First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan represents a transformative opportunity to embed Traditional Owners and First Peoples at the heart of Victoria's renewable energy transition.

This Strategic Plan seeks to address the historical exclusion of First Peoples from decision-making processes affecting their lands and resources, a legacy rooted in colonisation and dispossession. While energy developments have often prioritised economic and industrial interests, this Strategic Plan aims to ensure that renewable energy projects contribute meaningfully to economic empowerment, environmental stewardship and climate action outcomes for Traditional Owners and opportunities for First Peoples.

On 12 December 2025, Victoria commenced Australia's first Treaty with First Peoples², marking a historic milestone grounded in generations of sustained advocacy and leadership by First Peoples. Statewide Treaty establishes Gellung Warl (Gullung-Warl, from Gunaikurnai language) as the democratically elected representative body for First Peoples in Victoria. Under the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025 (Vic)*, the State has legal obligations to engage in good faith with Gellung Warl and give effect to its legislated powers and functions, including its role to inform, advise and make decisions on matters affecting First Peoples.

For many thousands of years, Victoria's Traditional Owners have been custodians of Country, maintaining its health and vitality through sophisticated knowledge systems and cultural practices. These connections, however, have been disrupted by systemic policies and practices that marginalised their rights and voices. As the State accelerates its shift toward renewable energy, there is a risk of repeating past injustices and an opportunity to forge a more equitable and inclusive future. The Strategic Plan aligns with the Victorian Government's broader commitments to self-determination, truth-telling, and reconciliation, as articulated through initiatives such as DEECA's *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu* Self-Determination Reform Strategy and the National agreement to Closing the Gap.

The energy sector remains one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions in Victoria, and a continued reliance on fossil fuels further drives the impacts of climate change on Country and community. The renewable energy transition is critical to achieving net zero emissions and avoiding the worst impacts and harms of climate change. Action on energy sector emissions reductions through the Strategic Plan will help to safeguard cultural knowledge, improve community health and wellbeing, and protect and heal Country.

Through structured actions, this Strategic Plan prioritises self-determination by enabling Traditional Owners to take ownership of renewable energy ventures, participate in governance roles, and embed their cultural knowledge into environmental management. These efforts aim to balance economic development with the protection of Country, the revitalisation of cultural landscapes, and the strengthening of community resilience.

This Strategic Plan was co-developed during the truth telling process of the Yoorrook Justice Commission. The final recommendations of the Yoorrook Justice Commission call for fundamental change across nearly every major area of public policy in this state.³

This Strategic Plan is the Victorian Government's commitment to ensuring Traditional Owners are well-informed, resourced, and supported to make choices about how they engage in the renewable energy transition. Whether through co-designed projects, benefit-sharing arrangements, or community-led energy generation, the renewable energy transition must be guided by First Peoples priorities and enable lasting economic and cultural outcomes. The Yoorrook Justice Commission highlight the need for government to include First Peoples in policy design. In the Yoorrook for Transformation Third Interim Report the Yoorrook Justice Commission stated "*First Peoples knowledge is critical to pathways to mitigate and adapt to climate change and help heal Country. First Peoples are willing to share this knowledge for the benefit of all. To enable this, the State must ensure that First Peoples have the power, authority, control and resources to engage in a self-determining process.*"⁴

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and refined in partnership with Traditional Owners and Gellung Warl to ensure it remains responsive to emerging community aspirations, implementation learnings and broader policy developments, including Statewide Treaty and any future Treaty chapters or Traditional Owner Treaties.



Chloe Chatterton

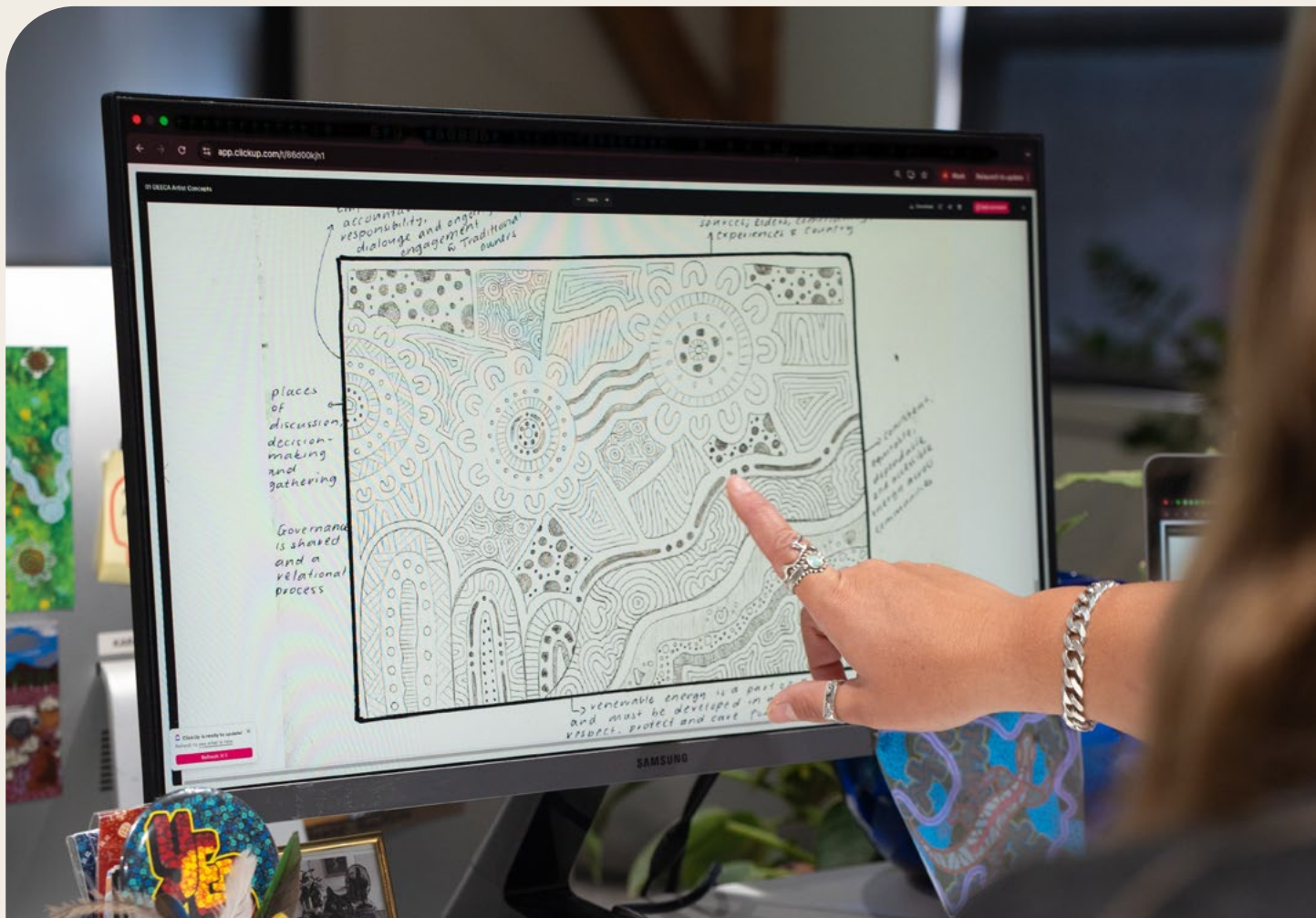
About the artist

Chloe Chatterton is a proud Wadawurrung woman and First Nations artist residing in Wurundjeri Country in the western suburbs.

She always loved art and its capacity to turn written and spoken words into images. Her work is inspired by her deep spiritual connection to Wadawurrung Country, where her ancestors have cared for and nurtured the land for generations. Her fine art practice is contemporary in nature and uses digital media to express her connection to culture and Country.

“ ‘The coastal, inland, and mountainous landscapes of Wadawurrung Country deeply move Chloe, and she finds returning to Wadawurrung Country a restorative and rejuvenating experience.’ ”

The stories and teachings of Chloe’s Wadawurrung heritage form the basis for her creative work, which explores places of significance and traditional symbolism. The coastal, inland, and mountainous landscapes of Wadawurrung Country deeply move Chloe, and she finds returning to Wadawurrung Country a restorative and rejuvenating experience. It allows her to reconnect with her cultural roots, a profoundly meaningful experience. Art ultimately serves as a way for Chloe to visually communicate Wadawurrung history, stories and culture. Teaching is also a passion, where Chloe strives to close the gap and break down the barriers many face in education, to ensure that everyone has an equal opportunity to reach their full potential and pursue their passions in life.



MAIWAN (Long Time)

This artwork highlights sustainability and enduring energy. It honors the timelessness of Country, fire, wind and water. The meeting places are where voices are heard and decisions are shaped. They are decision making centres. And symbolise the shared responsibility of communities.

Energy comes from many sources including fire, wind and water. Each element is symbolically represented within this piece celebrating their vital role is sustaining the world around us. Knowledge is not rushed. It is built layer by layer, passed along the same paths walked by our ancestors and by generations before us.

This story speaks of a future where renewable energy moves with Country and is guided by the Traditional owners that care and belong to it.

Artwork meaning

Currents

Symbolises ocean currents (kinetic energy).

Water and bay

Energy comes from many sources including fire, wind and water. Each element is symbolically represented within this piece celebrating their vital role is sustaining the world around us.

Knowledge

Knowledge comes from many sources. Elders, community, experiences and Country.

Line work patterns

Represents Country being active and alive. Energy is a part of the landscape. Caring for Country is inseparable from energy planning.



Meeting Places

Scattered through the art piece to symbolise decision making centers (different groups of people, perspectives and responsibilities).

Symbolises the relationships and knowledge involved in renewable energy.

Represents shared governance rather than centralised control (self determination, connection and respect).

Yaluk (river)

Rivers link communities, carry stories and nourish country. It sustains and connects us. Energy flows like water. It is reliable, steady and shared.

Explanation of terms

A **Traditional Owner** is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person who has formally recognised traditional connections to an identified geographical area of Country.

Aboriginal refers to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. They may have connections within and outside of Victoria. The use of the term Indigenous is sometimes used in the names of programs, initiatives, publication titles and, unless otherwise noted, is inclusive of both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Community refers to and acknowledges all Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria. Community can be used to describe the entire Victorian Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander community or smaller specific communities, as the context requires.

Cultural safety refers to 'an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening'. For Aboriginal people working at the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA), as well as in our partnerships with Traditional Owners, cultural safety means creating environments, relationships and systems free from racism and discrimination so that people feel safe, valued and able to participate. In other words, cultural safety makes space for culture to live and for spiritual and belief systems to exist.

First Nations people or **First Peoples** refers to peoples or nations of people connected to an area prior to colonisation. These terms have some general acceptance but may not be the term preferred by individuals or specific groups of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Free, prior and informed consent is a recognised right for Indigenous Peoples set out in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), which aligns with their universal right to self-determination. It is a collective right for a group of Indigenous people that requires:

- consent to be given voluntarily and free from coercion, intimidation, manipulation, expectations, or externally imposed timelines;

- early engagement and sufficiently ahead of a requirement for authorisation or commencement of the relevant activity;
- information to be provided to the community that is accessible, culturally appropriate and is easy to understand for the community; and
- consent to be granted according to the customary processes of the relevant Indigenous group.

Indigenous Data Sovereignty is the right of Aboriginal people to govern the collection, ownership and use of data about their communities, people, land and resources.

Individual rights are the fundamental rights guaranteed by a government so that every individual citizen can live a free and equitable life.

Self-determination is all about choice. The UNDRIP describes self-determination as the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural equity, based on their own values and way of life. That means Traditional Owners have the right to make choices that best reflect them on their journey to self-determination and self-governance.

A Traditional Owner Corporation is an incorporated group that represents the interests of Traditional Owners in a particular area. They may hold rights under the *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*, *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)* or *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)* on behalf of the Traditional Owners they represent.

A **Treaty** is a negotiated political agreement between First Peoples and the State to establish a renewed relationship and practical ways of working together. The Victorian Government has signed a Statewide Treaty with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. The *Statewide Treaty Act 2025 (the Act)* establishes a new entity, Gellung Warl (pronounced Gullung-Warl from Gunaikurnai language), evolved from Victoria's successful First Peoples' Assembly. Gellung Warl was established on 1 May 2026. Future Traditional Owner Treaties and ongoing Statewide Treaty Chapters may also be negotiated in Victoria.

Guiding Principles

Self-determination is all about choice. The UNDRIP describes self-determination as the ability for Indigenous people to freely determine their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural equity, based on their own values and way of life. That means Traditional Owners have the right to make choices that best reflect them on their journey to self-determination and self-governance.⁵

The Strategic Plan also draws from *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu* 'Owning our Future' DEECA's Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy principles:

People

DEECA is culturally capable and safe; recognising, supporting, valuing and embracing Aboriginal decision-making

Systems

DEECA has transformational systems that respect Aboriginal decision-making, leadership and self-governance

Country

DEECA supports Traditional Owners' rights on Country so that their aspirations for land, water and culture are realised

Accountability

DEECA is accountable and transparent in its efforts to transfer relevant decision-making powers and resources to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians



Wildflower, Grampians

Vision

A just and equitable energy transition where Victorian Traditional Owners are equal partners, empowered through UNDRIP principles to lead change, shape legislation, and ensure energy projects deliver lasting benefits for Country and Culture.

Co-designed process

First Peoples have been holistically caring for Country over many thousands of years, developing an integrated knowledge, practice, and relationship between people and place.

In the process of colonisation, governments and industries largely ignored the rights and obligations of First Peoples and took a very different approach to land. This has led to our current situation where use of fossil fuels is accelerating climate change, and urgent action is required by all of us. It is incumbent on government and industries in Victoria to partner with First Peoples so a holistic approach to caring for Country and community can be restored, particularly with respect to governance, program design, and implementation.

The Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) is committed to a meaningful energy transition that works in partnership with Traditional Owners. In 2024 DEECA began seeking interest in the co-development of the First Peoples Strategic Plan and identifying commitment to a shared path towards the renewable energy transition. Equitable engagement must move beyond compliance with relevant procedures and standards to ensure Traditional Owners are properly resourced, informed, and empowered to act in their communities' best interests.

The Strategic Plan was developed through a series of workshops with representatives from Registered Aboriginal Parties to understand their policy ideas and aspirations directly from communities. The verbatim voices of First Peoples are articulated throughout the development and direction of this Strategic Plan.

Throughout the co-design process of the First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan, objectives were identified that reflect the aspirations and priorities shared by Traditional Owners. To achieve these outcomes, the Victorian Government and Traditional Owners are working together to deliver the identified objectives over the next three years. These actions are designed to empower Traditional Owners, safeguard cultural and environmental values, and ensure equitable participation in the energy transition. Each Traditional Owner group has their own particular requirements, priorities and responsibilities, and the development of this Strategic Plan is a collective effort; it may not cover or meet everything that each Traditional Owner group has expressed. Despite this, the Strategic Plan aims to respect Traditional Owner views and create a framework where obligations, rights, and needs of the diversity of Traditional Owner groups are respected.

First Peoples have been caring for Country over many thousands of years and have a holistic approach to caring for Country. Wherever possible, governments and industry should be working collaboratively with Traditional Owners to enable approaches that support this holistic approach, especially with respect to governance, program design and implementation.

Development of this Strategic Plan was led by DEECA but co-designed with representatives from Traditional Owner Corporations. Traditional Owner Corporations were invited to participate in:

- One-on-one interviews over 12 months.
- Two-day forum
- Eight workshops
- Written feedback throughout the co-design

These pathways have been instrumental in the complete design of the First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan.

Working Group membership is made up of officers from the following organisations:

- Barengi Gadjin Land Council
- Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation)
- Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
- First People of the Millewa Mallee
- Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
- Taungurung Land & Waters Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Wadawurrung Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
- Wamba Wamba Aboriginal Corporation
- Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation

Structure of the Strategic Plan

Vision statement

A just and equitable energy transition where Victorian Traditional Owners are equal partners, empowered through UNDRIP principles to lead change, shape legislation, and ensure energy projects deliver lasting benefits for Country and Culture.

Goals

Goal 1

Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement

Goal 2

Economic Independence and Fair Value Sharing

Objectives and Outcomes

1.1 Strong oversight, monitoring, reporting, and collaboration.

- Traditional Owners are regularly informed and where possible included in project design to ensure transparency, accountability and better outcomes.
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles are embedded in the work of the Victorian Government.

1.2 Strengthening legal requirements and policy to support Traditional Owner rights, obligations and aspirations.

- Policy development is created or reviewed embedding Traditional Owners rights.

1.3 Early, fair, transparent, and culturally respectful engagement.

- Appropriate engagement practices are embedded into policy design and evaluation.
- Culturally safe developers are highlighted and promoted.

1.4 Access to early information and resourcing.

- Traditional Owner Corporations are resourced to ensure appropriate participation.
- Culturally safe consultants and specialists are highlighted and promoted.
- Project reporting is streamlined in line with Traditional Owner Corporations individual needs.

2.1 Investigate clean energy projects and asset ownership

- Traditional Owner Corporations are supported to map their needs and develop plans for renewable energy projects.
- First Peoples businesses are supported to actively participate in the renewable energy transition.
- First Peoples start ups are supported to explore opportunities in the renewable energy transition.

2.2 Enable First Peoples-led design and management of value sharing approaches and localised priorities and aspirations.

- Traditional Owner Corporations are supported to access legal advice.
- DEECA highlight and promote Traditional Owner Corporations localised expectation. Traditional owners evaluate and review processes.

Goal 3

Affordable, Reliable and Fair Energy Access

3.1 Culturally appropriate clean energy solutions for households and communities.

- Barriers to energy efficiencies are identified and pathways to overcome barriers are identified.
 - First Peoples have access to culturally appropriate energy programs and information.
 - First Peoples priorities are highlighted and embedded into program design.
-

Goal 4

Caring for Country

4.1 Environmental conservation throughout project lifecycles in-line with cultural practices.

- Renewable energy projects are planned to reduce harm to Country and include environment restoration and decommissioning plans.
 - Regular evaluation and reporting on renewable energy projects to ensure minimal harm to the environment.
 - Opportunities are identified for Traditional Owner Corporation businesses for the protection and revitalisation of Country.
-

4.2 Traditional Owners empowered to protect and manage cultural heritage.

- Clear, localised expectations highlighted and distributed to renewable energy developers.
 - Cultural mapping programs are co-designed with Traditional Owner Corporations.
-

Goal 5

Strengthening Knowledge and Capacity Building

5.1 Building culturally grounded knowledge, guidance and tools.

- Culturally appropriate resources and tools are created and updated to align with First Peoples expectations
 - Traditional Owner Corporations are supported to engage in renewable energy planning.
-

5.2 First Peoples workforce pathways and leadership in renewable energy.

- First Peoples have access to localised training pathways in renewable energy
 - First Peoples have access to localised, targeted and culturally safe employment and mentoring opportunities.
-

Policy Landscape

Victoria’s renewable energy transformation is being guided by a broad suite of intersecting programs and policies across climate change and renewable energy initiatives.

Principally delivered by DEECA Energy, VicGrid, Solar Victoria and the State Electricity Commission, the Victorian Government is committed to ensuring the renewable energy transition includes Victoria’s First Peoples, unlike the exclusionary past practices of government and industry in mining and resource development. The First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan builds upon and consolidates what we have learned so far.

It sets out how Victoria’s bold energy transition targets and activities can be aligned with the rights, interests, and aspirations of Traditional Owners to ensure that renewable energy development respects Country, upholds self-determination, and delivers meaningful benefits for First Peoples.

The Victorian Government recognises the importance of self-determination in ensuring First Peoples in Victoria play a leading role in the renewable energy transition. While self-determination may take different forms for different communities, the principle affirmed in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) is the right of Indigenous peoples to freely determine their political status and to pursue their own economic, social and cultural development.

In Victoria, this commitment is embedded in key frameworks including DEECA’s *Pupangarli Marnmarnepu ‘Owning Our Future’ Aboriginal Self-Determination Reform Strategy 2020–2025*, the State’s Treaty commitment, and now the *Victorian First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan*. These efforts collectively aim to strengthen First Peoples authority in decision-making, support economic participation, and elevate cultural rights in line with international standards.



“

‘Treaty marks a new beginning for Victoria – an invitation for all Victorians to walk forward together, guided by truth, integrity and determination as we build a better future for all.

Treaty will forge a new relationship between the State and First Peoples in Victoria, built on respect, trust, accountability and integrity”⁶

The Treaty process marks a historic opportunity to formalise partnerships between the Victorian Government and First Peoples.

In accordance with the *Statewide Treaty Act 2025*, the Victorian Government is committed to working with Gellung Warl and giving effect to its legislated powers and functions, including to inform, advise and make decisions on matters affecting First Peoples, in the implementation of this Strategic Plan. Treaty also includes and advances the important work undertaken by the Yoorrook Justice Commission, the first formal truth-telling process into historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria.

The following statement to the Yoorrook Justice Commission by the Hon. Lily D’Ambrosio, Minister for Energy, Environment and Climate Change, on 22 April 2024, highlights the past practices and attitudes of governments and industry towards Victoria’s First Peoples in relation to resource development.

“... the legal reality of British sovereignty was the State-sanctioned dispossession of First Peoples land and waters on a devastating scale. The dispossession was fuelled in large part by the quest for wealth in the form of what the colonial state conceptualised as resources for the creation of wealth, including gold and other metals and minerals and rich pastures to enable large scale agriculture including wool production. History shows that these were viewed as riches for easy exploitation for settlers and the colonising state alike and were treated as such in accordance with the imported legal systems and processes.”

The National Agreement on Closing the Gap

The *First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan 2026–2029* aligns with several targets that support the priority reforms within the *National Agreement on closing the Gap*

- Strong economic participation and development of people and their communities (Target 8).
- Secure, appropriate, affordable housing that is aligned with their priorities and needs (Target 9).
- Essential services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander households (Target 9b).
- Maintaining cultural, spiritual, and economic connections with land and waters (Target 15).
- Access to information and services for informed decision-making (Target 17).

The Victorian government’s commitment to the *First Peoples Renewable Energy Strategic Plan 2026–2029* represents a significant turning point. It represents more than a shift in how we power our homes and businesses; it is a chance to address historic injustices and create new opportunities for Traditional Owners and First Peoples to benefit from projects that respect Country, protect cultural heritage, and align with community values.

Legal Landscape

Traditional Owners have a unique role in the energy transition, as well as their rights and responsibilities that are enshrined in the following Commonwealth and State legislation:

- *Native Title Act 1993 (Cth)*
- *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*
- *Climate Change Act 2022 (Cth)*
- *Planning and Environment Act 1987 (Vic)*
- *National Electricity (Victoria) Act 2005*
- *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Victorian Renewable Energy Act 2006 (Vic)*
- *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic)*
- *Climate Action Act 2017 (Vic)*
- *Statewide Treaty Act 2025 (Vic)*

Each of these Acts legislate the rights of Traditional Owners and intersect with the way that the energy transition will be planned, managed and decommissioned.

In Victoria, DEECA and VicGrid are working with Traditional Owners to create a new standard for social outcomes. The findings of the Strategic Plan have been included in the development of key VicGrid policies.



Goal 1:

Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement



Summary

Current State and Federal legislation detail the role requirement for Traditional Owner involvement in project development on Country. Inadequate time and information currently does not allow for meaningful participation. 'Goal 1: Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement' details expected outcomes and actions that can break down barriers and recreate processes that will allow genuine participation and create better social outcomes and a smoother transition.

Planning timelines, information restrictions, and inadequate funding currently make it very difficult for Traditional Owner groups to advocate for and meet their rights and obligations. 'Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement' sets a new standard for how projects are scoped, planned, delivered and decommissioned on Country. Renewable energy projects need to be centred on respect, equity, and long-term benefits for First Peoples communities. Traditional Owner priorities and expectations will be heard through early and transparent engagement with Traditional Owner Corporations, allowing time for informed and genuine co-design of projects. A review of opportunities for strengthening engagement requirements through governance and accountability opportunities mapping will create greater social outcomes for the energy transition.

Goal 1 is made up of three distinct sections;

- **Governance** – Structures and procedures are set up to ensure quality process is followed.
- **Accountability** – We do what we say we will do.
- **Engagement** – Genuine, fair and transparent communication guides our work.

What success looks like

Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement will demonstrate a focus on the strength and integrity of data sovereignty. DEECA is guided by the Pathway towards an Indigenous Data Sovereignty Policy 2023, which sets out the steps needed to strengthen how DEECA collects, stores and manages data relating to First Peoples. This includes fully established data sovereignty practices with requirements embedded in all agreements, and clear evidence that developers have committed to Indigenous Data Sovereignty protocols. Guidelines or frameworks are shared transparently between DEECA and individual Traditional Owners, with reciprocal feedback loops and clear expectations set by the Working Group members.

Engagement is measured through the extent to which Traditional Owner Corporations determine their own participation and exercise self-determination across policy development, implementation, and project delivery. Success is demonstrated when Traditional Owners can clearly trace their influence through tangible outcomes, when accountability mechanisms function effectively, and when participation is active, meaningful, and aligned with the aspirations of each Traditional Owner Corporation.

A large, dark grey quotation mark icon is positioned at the top left of the page, partially overlapping the background image of a mountain landscape.

'The Taungurung Land and Waters Council (TLaWC) is committed to guiding and being actively involved in renewable energy projects on Taungurung Country. TLaWC seeks to share in the benefits of projects through opportunities that align with the organisation's principles, values, rights and objectives to ensure the health and well-being of Taungurung Country and People. Appropriate compensation is expected from all projects that impact Taungurung Country, and to negotiate Access and Benefit-sharing Agreements with owners and operators on Country.'

– Matthew Burns, CEO Taungurung Land and Waters Council

Goal 1:

Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement

Objectives

Outcomes

1.1

Strong oversight, monitoring, reporting, and collaboration.

- Traditional Owners are regularly informed and where possible included in project design to ensure transparency, accountability and better outcomes.
- Indigenous Data Sovereignty principles are embedded in the work of the Victorian Government.

1.2

Strengthening legal requirements and policy to support Traditional Owner rights, obligations and aspirations.

- Policy development is created or reviewed embedding Traditional Owners rights.

1.3

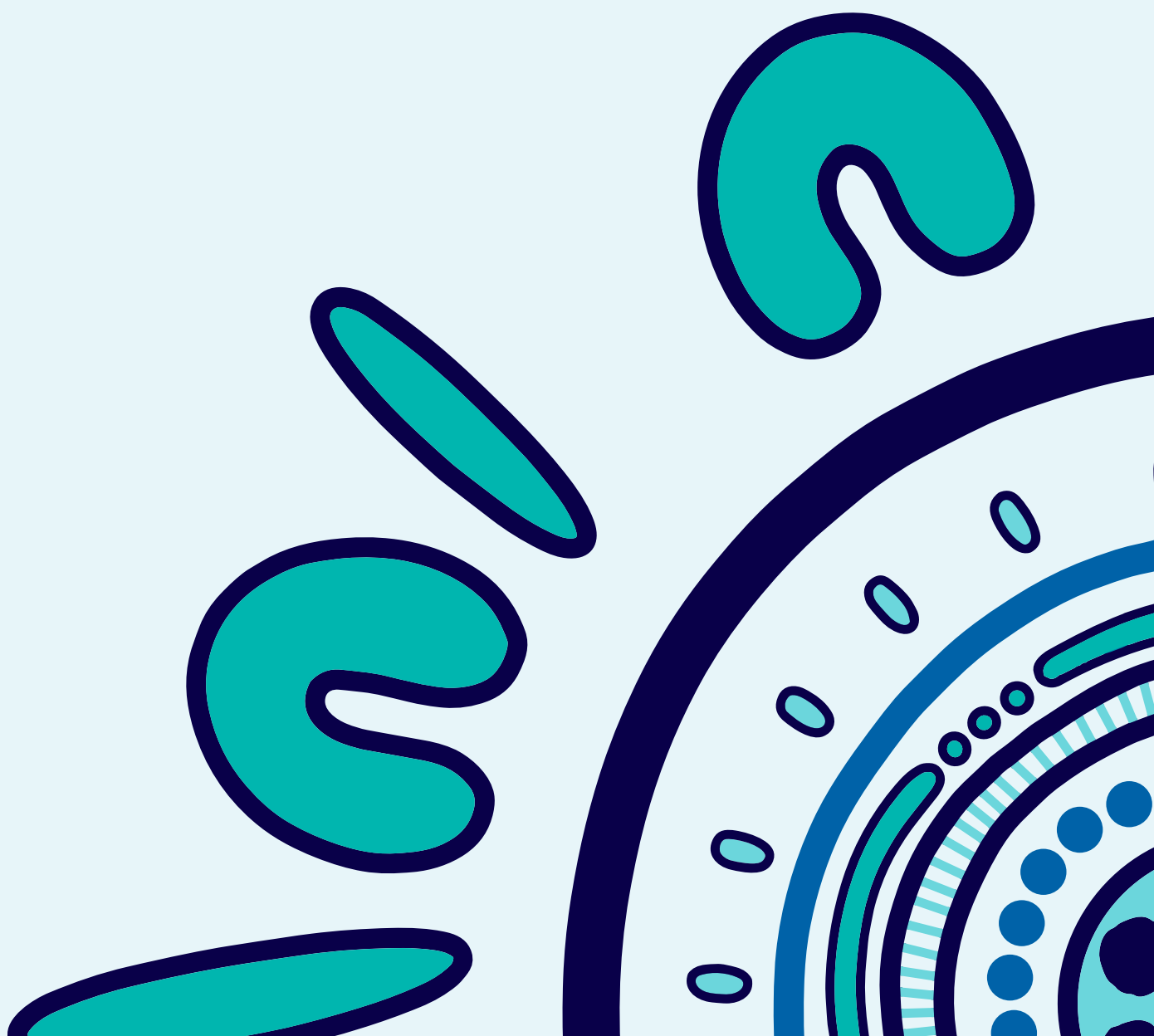
Early, fair, transparent, and culturally respectful engagement.

- Appropriate engagement practices are embedded into policy design and evaluation.
- Culturally safe developers are highlighted and promoted.

1.4

Access to early information and resourcing

- Traditional Owner Corporations are resourced to ensure appropriate participation.
- Culturally safe consultants and specialists are highlighted and promoted.
- Project reporting is streamlined in line with Traditional Owner Corporations individual needs.



Goal 2:

Economic Independence and Fair Value Sharing



Summary

The renewable energy transition creates an economic opportunity for Victoria. New projects have the potential to provide community-led economic empowerment to First Peoples communities through direct participation in project delivery, and associated supply chains, including infrastructure development, procurement, and resource management. The renewable energy transition presents opportunities for Traditional Owners to secure long-term economic independence through participation in the clean energy economy through clean energy project partnerships and asset ownership.

What success looks like

A just and fair renewable energy transition will provide economic empowerment to First Peoples communities who have renewable energy projects on their Country. This will be community-led through direct participation in project development, delivery, supply chains, infrastructure development, procurement, and management of Country. A just and fair renewable energy transition will allow Traditional Owners to secure long-term economic independence through clean energy project partnerships and asset ownership including the transfer of land.

Goal 2 is made up of two distinct areas;

- **Self-determined economic opportunities** – Community owned projects or businesses supported by social procurement processes.
- **Fair Value Sharing** – Value sharing co-design processes are defined.

Goal 2:

Economic Independence and Fair Value Sharing

Objectives

Outcomes

2.1

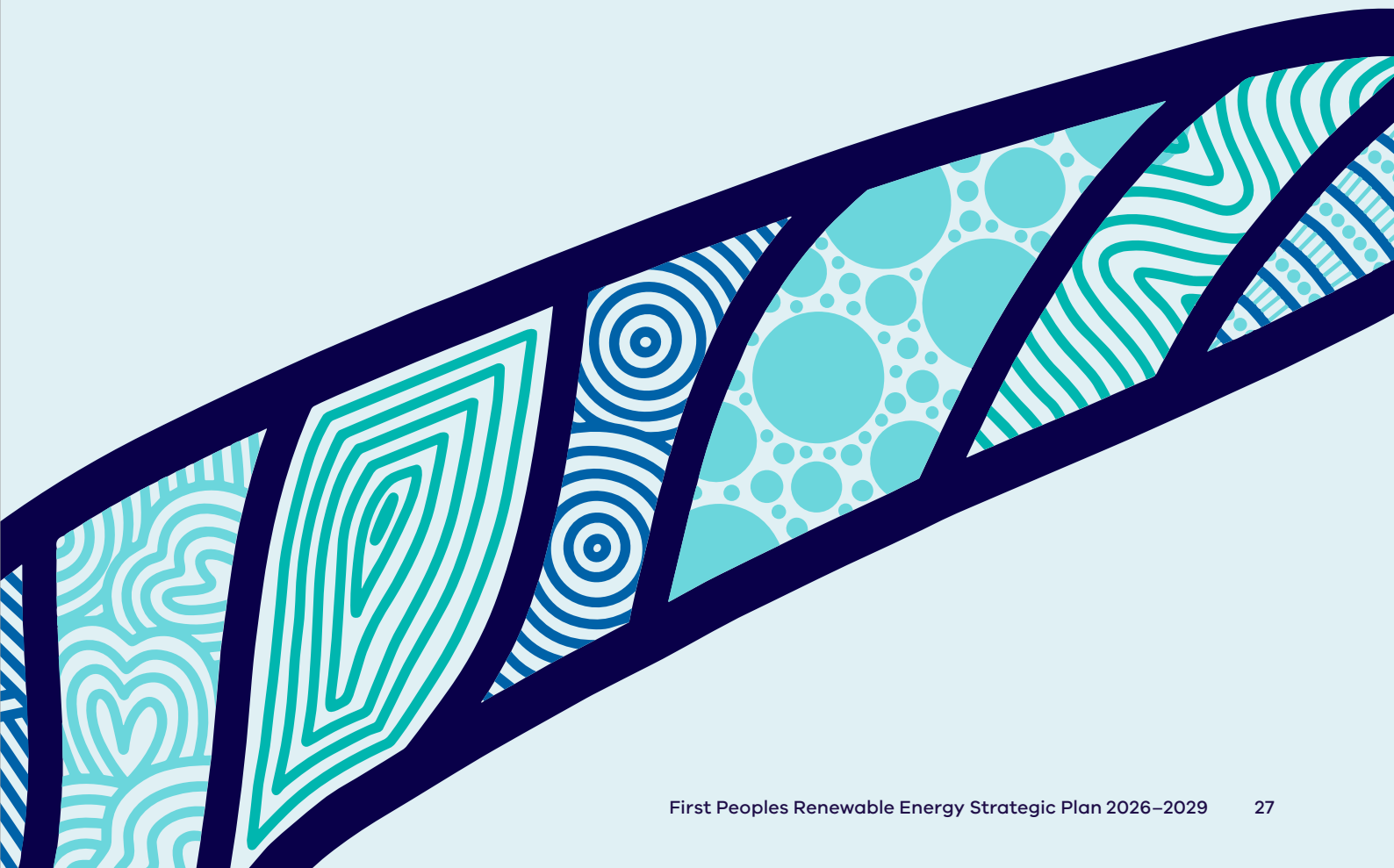
Investigate clean energy projects and asset ownership.

- Traditional Owner Corporations are supported to map their needs and develop plans for renewable energy projects.
- First Peoples businesses are supported to actively participate in the renewable energy transition.
- First Peoples start ups are supported to explore opportunities in the renewable energy transition.

2.2

Enable First Peoples-led design and management of value sharing approaches and localised priorities and aspirations.

- Traditional Owner Corporations are supported to access legal advice.
- DEECA highlight and promote Traditional Owner Corporations localised expectation. Traditional owners evaluate and review processes.



Goal 3:

Affordable, Reliable and Fair Energy Access



Summary

Culturally safe and accessible services and supports that embody the leading role that Traditional Owners play in the energy transition.

Many First Nations communities want to explore alternative renewable energy systems to strengthen energy security, lower electricity costs, and reduce dependence on government and external service providers. By establishing more reliable, community-led energy solutions, First Peoples communities can take greater control over their energy futures. Such initiatives have the potential to deliver lasting social, environmental, and economic benefits, ensuring that the transition to clean, low-cost energy supports community wellbeing and self-determination.

What success looks like

First Peoples have access to culturally safe and affordable renewable energy. This can be achieved by connecting to large-scale renewable energy projects, or by the development of community and household renewable energy systems. The outcomes are to strengthen energy security, lower electricity costs, and reduce dependence on government and external service providers. Community scale renewable energy initiatives can deliver lasting social, environmental, and economic benefits, ensuring that the transition to clean, low-cost energy supports community wellbeing and self-determination.

Goal 3:

Affordable, Reliable and Fair Energy Access

Objectives

3.1
Culturally appropriate clean energy solutions for households and communities.

Outcomes

- Barriers to energy efficiencies are identified and pathways to overcome barriers are identified.
- First Peoples have access to culturally appropriate energy programs and information.
- First Peoples priorities are highlighted and embedded into program design.



Goal 4:

Caring for Country



Summary

Traditional Owners have sustainably managed their lands and waters for many thousands of years, their authority to protect tangible and intangible cultural heritage must be recognised in project design and operation. Project development should have thorough consideration for caring for Country to ensure development protects the land, waters, and sacred places that hold deep cultural, spiritual, and ecological significance for Victoria's First Peoples. 'Caring for Country' outlines expectations across every stage of project planning, design, implementation and decommissioning to uphold cultural values and ensure sustainable outcomes for both Country and First Peoples communities.

Traditional Owners and First Peoples are already experiencing the disruptive impacts of climate change and its harms to Country. Action on climate change is a priority. Achieving these climate action objectives must be done in partnership with Traditional Owner and First Peoples, with recognition of legal rights and consideration and respect for broader Caring for Country principles and objectives.

Building infrastructure on Country risks reshaping cultural landscapes, disturbing cultural heritage, and creating tensions with existing land uses and responsibilities. Governments and industry must be working collaboratively with Traditional Owners to enable strategic land usages that support a holistic approach guided by Traditional Owners. To work towards a renewable energy transition that cares for Country and cultural heritage, developers must be supported to utilise Traditional Owner expertise on minimising harm to Country at all aspects of project development.

What success looks like

Project development must respect, protect, and restore Country. It must respect and respond to Traditional Owner rights and obligations across every stage of project planning, design, implementation, and decommissioning. There must be improved outcomes for both Country and First Peoples communities.

Building infrastructure on Country risks reshaping cultural landscapes, disturbing cultural heritage, and creating tensions with existing land uses and responsibilities. DEECA and industry must work collaboratively with Traditional Owners to enable holistic, strategic land use guided by Traditional Owners. DEECA must adequately support Traditional Owners to work with developers to ensure Country is protected and restored through all stages of a renewable energy project.

'Caring for Country' is made up of two sections

- **Responsible development** – Embedding 'Caring for Country' in a project's lifecycle
- **Traditional Owner leadership** – Empowering Traditional Owner expertise in Country

“

‘Healthy Country means healthy People, now and for future generations.

Wurundjeri learnt the ways of nurturing *biik* (Country) with *wiin* (fire), reading the signs within the soil, the plants, the animals, wurru-wurru (the skies) and the seven seasons, to bring right *biik* and right *wiin* together. As Traditional Owners, we need to maintain our connection to culture and knowledge of the landscape.

Ecological poisoning has had terrible impacts for wildlife in our waterways, land and skies. When nature is damaged, it must be restored with the right plants and trees in the right locations and across the three layers – the bottom, middle and tall storeys, so it continues to survive and evolve.

With the changing climate, we need to have sustainable energy and take care of all aspects of Country.

This is Bunjil’s lore, the cultural responsibility of caring for Country.’

– Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Policy and Partnerships Subcommittee



Wurundjeri Country
Credit: Aunty Irene Morris, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Elder

Objectives and outcomes

Goal 4:

Caring for Country

Objectives

Outcomes

4.1

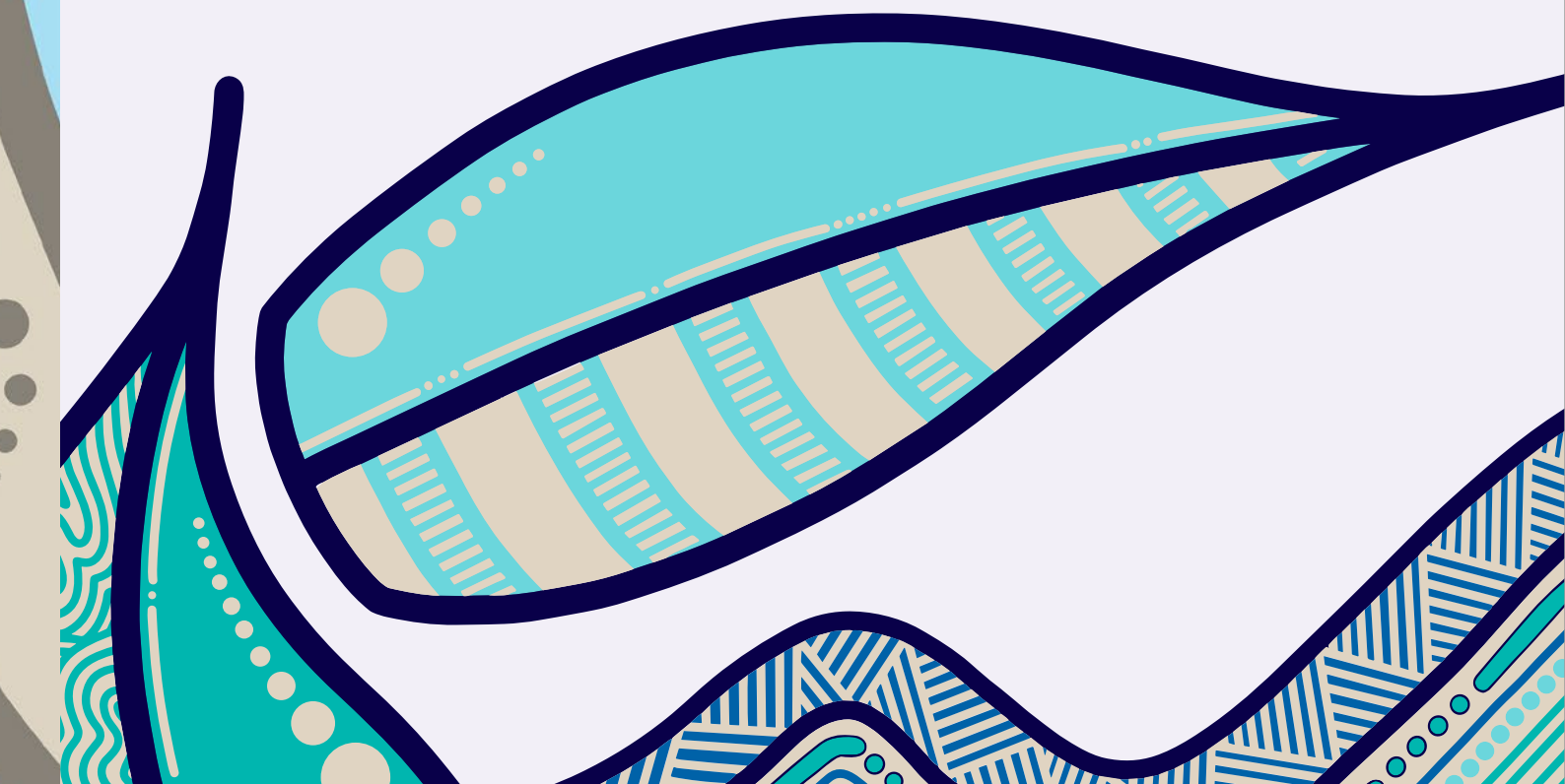
Environmental conservation throughout project lifecycles in-line with cultural practices.

- Renewable energy projects are planned to reduce harm to Country and include environment restoration and decommissioning plans.
- Regular evaluation and reporting on renewable energy projects to ensure minimal harm to the environment.
- Government and renewable energy developers identify opportunities for Traditional Owners to protect and manage Country.

4.2

Traditional Owners empowered to protect and manage cultural heritage.

- Clear, localised expectations highlighted and distributed to renewable energy developers.
- Cultural mapping programs are co-designed with Traditional Owner Corporations.





Wurundjeri Country
Credit: Wurundjeri Narrap Rangers

Goal 5:

Strengthening Knowledge and Capacity Building



Summary

First Peoples must have access to clear information, tools and resources regarding the energy transition. Building capacity requires investment in clear guidance materials and in Traditional Owners technical understanding of energy projects. Strengthening First Peoples education and training pathways will support their leadership in the renewable energy transition, enable negotiations for fair benefit arrangements and contribute to equitable, sustainable, and inclusive energy development.

Strengthening knowledge and capacity must be First Peoples-led and grounded in self-determination, ensuring Traditional Owners and Aboriginal communities across Victoria have the authority, capability and support to shape renewable energy development on Country, in line with their cultural values, aspirations and economic priorities.

What success looks like

First Peoples have increased knowledge, capability, workforce participation and leadership across the renewable energy sector, enabling informed decision-making, strong representation across entry, specialist and leadership roles, and the ability to negotiate and shape fairer benefit arrangements that support equitable, sustainable and inclusive energy development.

Goal 5 is broken down into two sections:

- **Strengthening knowledge** – Enabling First Peoples to access, develop and lead culturally grounded knowledge, guidance and tools that support self-determination and leadership in the renewable energy transition.
- **Capacity building** – Establishing strong, culturally safe and interconnected systems of support that build First Peoples capability, workforce participation and leadership.



Objectives and outcomes

Goal 5:

Strengthening Knowledge and Capacity Building

Objectives

Outcomes

5.1

Building culturally grounded knowledge, guidance and tools.

- Culturally appropriate resources and tools are created and updated to align with First Peoples expectations
- Traditional Owner Corporations are supported to engage in renewable energy planning.

5.2

First Peoples workforce pathways and leadership in renewable energy.

- First Peoples have access to localised training pathways in renewable energy
- First Peoples have access to localised, targeted and culturally safe employment and mentoring opportunities.



Commitment to ongoing partnership, accountability and delivery

This Strategic Plan represents DEECA's enduring commitment to First Peoples self-determination in the renewable energy transition.

The implementation of this Strategic Plan will be guided by respect for Traditional Owner rights, cultural authority and decision making, and by a shared commitment to outcomes that deliver lasting benefits for Country, culture and community.

The implementation of the Strategic Plan is organised across three interconnected categories. Foundational actions establish the governance, relationships and cultural authority required for meaningful participation and trust. Enabling actions strengthen capability, access to information and systems that support Traditional Owners to exercise self-determination. Transformational actions drive long term change, embedding First Peoples leadership, economic participation and caring for Country at the centre of Victoria's renewable energy system. Together, these categories reflect a deliberate pathway from strong foundations to enduring structural change.

Accountability and transparency

DEECA is committed to being accountable for the delivery of this Strategic Plan. Implementation will be overseen through established governance arrangements, including a working group comprising Traditional Owner Corporations and DEECA representatives. Progress against actions will be tracked and reported publicly on a regular basis and reported to Gellung Warl as requested.

Accountability is shared. Traditional Owners play a central role in defining what success looks like, monitoring progress, and shaping continuous improvement. Government agencies and proponents will be expected to demonstrate how Traditional Owner input has informed decisions, outcomes and project delivery, consistent with the principles of early, fair and culturally respectful engagement.

A living and adaptive framework

This Strategic Plan is intended to be a living framework. It recognises the diversity of Traditional Owner groups across Victoria and that priorities, opportunities and challenges will continue to evolve as the renewable energy transition progresses.

The Strategic Plan will be reviewed and refined in partnership with Gellung Warl, Traditional Owners and service delivery partners to ensure it remains responsive to emerging community aspirations, implementation learnings and broader policy developments including Statewide Treaty and any future Treaty chapters or Traditional Owner Treaties. This adaptive approach acknowledges that no single plan can capture every aspiration, and that ongoing dialogue, trust and learning are essential to achieving lasting change.

Looking ahead

The renewable energy transition presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to do things differently. By embedding self-determination, caring for Country and shared accountability at the centre of decision-making, Victoria can build an energy system that is cleaner, fairer and more just.

This Strategic Plan sets a clear direction for how government, Traditional Owners and industry can walk forward together — with respect, integrity and shared purpose — to ensure the renewable energy transition strengthens Country, supports thriving First Peoples communities, and delivers benefits for all Victorians.

Vision statement

A just and equitable energy transition where Victorian Traditional Owners are equal partners, empowered through UNDRIP principles to lead change, shape legislation, and ensure energy projects deliver lasting benefits for Country and Culture.

Time	Objective	Goal
1 years and ongoing	5.1 Building culturally grounded knowledge, guidance and tools.	5 Strengthening Knowledge and Capacity Building
1–2 years	1.1 Strong oversight, monitoring, reporting, and collaboration.	1 Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement
1–2 years	1.3 Early, fair, transparent, and culturally respectful engagement.	1 Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement
1–2 years	1.4 Access to early information and resourcing.	1 Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement
1–3 years	2.1 Investigate clean energy projects and asset ownership	2 Economic Independence and Fair Value Sharing
1–3 years and ongoing	2.2 Enable First Peoples-led design and management of value sharing approaches and localised priorities and aspirations.	2 Economic Independence and Fair Value Sharing
1–2 years and ongoing	3.1 Culturally appropriate clean energy solutions for households and communities.	3 Affordable, Reliable and Fair Energy Access
2–3 years	4.2 Traditional Owners empowered to protect and manage cultural heritage.	4 Caring for Country
3+ years	1.2 Strengthening legal requirements and policy to support Traditional Owner rights, obligations and aspirations.	1 Strong Governance, Accountability and Engagement
3+ years	4.1 Environmental conservation throughout project lifecycles in-line with cultural practices.	4 Caring for Country
3+ years	5.2 First Peoples workforce pathways and leadership in renewable energy.	5 Strengthening Knowledge and Capacity Building

Endnotes

- 1 Yoorrook Justice Commission (2024), *Transcript of Day 9 – Public Hearing*, Law in Order Pty Ltd www.yoorrook.org.au/additional-materials/transcript-land-sky-and-waters-hearing-22-april-2024
- 2 The State of Victoria and the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, *Victoria's Statewide Treaty* (signed 13 November 2025) www.treatyvictoria.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2025-11/Victorias-Statewide-Treaty-SIGNED.pdf
- 3 C Grand (2025), *The final Yoorrook report delivers unapologetic truths*, The Age <https://www.theage.com.au/national/victoria/the-final-yoorrook-report-delivers-unapologetic-truths-20250701-p5mbk2.html>
- 4 Yoorrook Justice Commission (2025) *Yoorrook for transformation: third interim report*, vol 2, Yoorrook Justice Commission, Melbourne cdn.craft.cloud/06ad3276-b3d9-4912-bcbb-37795aade9a8/assets/documents/YoorrookForTransformation_Third_Interim_Report-Volume2_Accessible.pdf
- 5 Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action [DEECA] (2025) *Traditional Owner and Aboriginal Community Engagement Framework*, Victorian Government, Melbourne <https://www.deeca.vic.gov.au/aboriginalselfdetermination/traditional-owner-and-aboriginal-community-engagement-framework>
- 6 The Victorian Government (n.d) *Victorian Statewide Treaty*, Victorian Government, Melbourne www.treatyvictoria.vic.gov.au/victorias-statewide-treaty



