Case Study: Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana (*Heart of Country*) Aboriginal Corporation

Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana (Heart of Country) Aboriginal Corporation (MTWAC) was formed in 2008, after a group of Tasmanian Aboriginal people came together to discuss how Community could be inclusive and have a voice especially in the area of Cultural Heritage and Knowledge. It currently operates as a not-for-profit organisation with operations centered on Tebrakunna Country (Cape Portland) in Trouwunna (Tasmania). MTWAC members are the direct descendants of the ancestors of Tebrakunna country, who were removed from their traditional lands in the early-to-mid-1800s.

The organisation's current co-chairs are Mark Harriss and Professor Emma Lee OAM. Nick Cameron is the outgoing chair and incoming inaugural CEO of the organisation. Nick has worked closely with the CED Manager in the region as part of the organisation's 5-year journey with Many Rivers.

The leadership group noted that by taking small progressive steps, the organisation has grown to over 300 members and hosts an annual event with 1000 people in attendance last year. Their success is both in organisational governance – the organisation received an Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI) Award in 2024 – and in the rapid growth in the organisation's programs and employment – particularly through the scaling of their *Tebrakunna Rangers* program since 2023.



2008 MTWAC formed.

Held first ***Mannalargenna Day,*** celebrating the life of ancestral grandfather Mannalargenna, revered Bungana (leader) of the clans of the Coastal Plains Nation.

2018 Begun the planning process to develop the organisation's first **5-year strategic plan**.

2019 Secured State Government funding to deliver ***Mannalargenna Day.***

2020 Following an unsuccessful application for a large grant, the MTWAC Board pivoted to focus on smaller funding opportunities.

2021 **Joined CED Program** as an '*emerging community*'. This involved the receipt of a targeted grant to cover operational resourcing including staffing during a setup stage.

2022 **Finalised 5-year strategic plan** with help from Many Rivers and developed a **longer-term plan (2030).** These plans were a key input for a successful application to secure $300,000 through the *Tasmanian Community Fund* to deliver the **ranger training program** over two years as a pilot, with 14 trainees.

2023 **Formally signed lease** at Mannalargenna Day, which guarantees MTWAC access and management rights to 200 acres of land for 20 years.

Junior Ranger program commenced, and the Ranger Program (pilot) expands with the employment of 3 Aboriginal Rangers

2024 **Two full-time staff appointed,** a General Manager and Executive Officer. The corporation receives **Australian Indigenous Governance Institute (AIGI)** Award in recognition of their best-practice approach, particularly the 'Elders Circle'.

The Indigenous Sea and Land Council provides funding for a ranger base **building and infrastructure**, for Rangers (which could not be funded through the IRP).

2025 The corporations access funding through the NIAA's **Indigenous Ranger Program** (IRP) to create jobs for 11 rangers on Tebrakunna Country.

The 10th Mannalargenna Day is held in December, with more than 1000 attendees across the Indigenous and non-Indigenous community in Northwest Tasmania.

2026 **The inaugural CEO is appointed.** Two board members move into co-chair roles.

School groups from across Tasmania and Victoria attend immersive camps on Tebrakunna Country,

Goals

Following a period of growth in the organisation's activities, which has coincided with growth in employment (within the organisation's administrative teams, and across its programs), the Co-chairs and CEO described their next goal as "*bringing MTWAC into a stabilisation phase*", with a continued presence on Tebrakunna Country, delivering the Ranger Program effectively (with a view to seek further funding in 2028), and continuing to deliver the annual *Mannalargena Day*.

MTWAC is also increasingly focused on youth, through the establishment of the Youth Hub in Launceston continued delivery of the Junior Ranger program (separate to the IRP, also working on country) and the delivery of school camps.

The future for Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana Aboriginal Corporation

The organisation will focus on building the productivity and capability of the Rangers, to work within smaller teams across specialist areas (land management, species management, caring for Sea Country).

MTWAC will also continue to pursue commercial opportunities through cultural tourism and land management and environmental conservation services. This model would see rangers from IRP to move into deliver land management work through ongoing contracts.

Unpacking the 'how' of community economic development

Examples of the CED activity and outcomes in the Melaythenner Teeackana Warrana Aboriginal Corporation Journey

Community agendas and conversations with community highlight the CED Program's role in supporting MTWAC to:

Translating a vision to a sequenced, strategic plan

Informed by meeting with the MTWAC Chair at the time, the CEDM drafted a proposed '8 year plan' (to 2030) which set out a sequenced set of tasks to build toward the goals defined by the community. This plan was then refined through discussion with the board and has been used as a basis to prioritise activity around 5 strategy priorities (see right).

Supporting operations

The CEDM focused initial support to the organisation as it moved from volunteer, Board-run to an operational entity. This included:

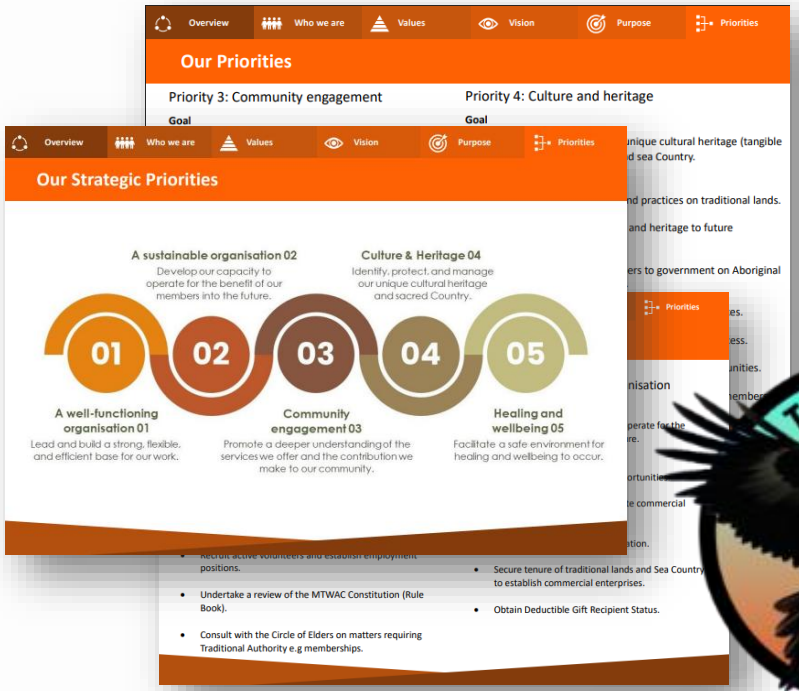
- Supporting the Board to secure funding to initiate their first program (Ranger training program)
- Working alongside their first part-time paid staff (an organisational manager on a short-term contract) to identify resources, necessary policies and procedures and funding priorities.
- The scoping and recruitment of a fulltime GM role (development of the PD, recruiting and onboarding)

More recently, as the organisation has funded more administrative positions and trained staff, the CEDM has become an advisor, focuses less on day-to-day operations and supporting with new processes, such as the recent CEO recruitment.

Strengthening financial management

Across the organisation's journey, the CEDM has worked with the Chair, GM and CEO to:

- Refine 5-year cashflow projections
- Support the development of Ranger sponsorship package and commercial costings
- Review IPA funding guidelines and prepare for IPA community consultations presentation
- Supporting funding applications for the Ranger Program (IRP)
- Preparing business plans which sit within funding /grant applications (e.g., the ILSC application).







Mapping to the program logic, these examples map to the following outcomes:

Improved governance foundations including:
- Legal structure
- Compliance with legislation
- Financial literacy
- Policies and procedures

Improved capability of community organisation leadership, management and operations

Access to new funding opportunities

Increased **employment** opportunities for community members

Increased community control over community **assets**

Increased organisational influence, choice and control over its agendas