



**NATIONAL
NATIVE TITLE
COUNCIL**



Annual Report
2025-2026

Cover Image

The cover image was captured by Reilly Wilson-Neil from North Queensland Land Council at Forrest Beach Wetlands on Nywaigi Country.

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Acknowledgement

The National Native Title Council acknowledges the First Peoples of the land, sea and waterways across the continent, the Torres Strait and Lutruwita (Tasmania). We celebrate First Nations People's enduring connection to Country, culture and community. We pay our respect to the Elders and Ancestors who guide us and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Cultural Message

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples should be aware that this report may contain images, quotes and references to people who have passed.

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Wooloweyah Lagoon, Yamba, New South Wales
Yaegl Country

Message from the Chair and CEO

The NNTC’s work is guided by what Traditional Owner members tell us matters most. The 2025-26 Annual Report highlights our members’ achievements and their commitment to leading in their communities. Our role is bringing members together to build collective power and strengthen the national voice for the native title sector.

This year the National Native Title Council (NNTC) has focused on structural reforms that direct more investment into First Nations communities. We have developed proposals for a native title system that recognises Traditional Owners as decision-makers over our own economic pathways. We know the solutions that work in our communities, but barriers remain when it comes to accessing capital so we can invest in our futures.

We launch this years’ Annual Report alongside a new NNTC insights report, the *State of the Sector 2026* report. This report compiles key metrics that members need about the growth and shape of the sector. Around 70% of Australia’s landmass is in the First Nations land estate,¹ with native title interests covering around 47%. We developed this new Report as a resource for members and native title sector practitioners.

Senior leaders from the Native Title Representative Body and Service Provider sector met regularly this year to share their expertise and inform our national policy agenda. NTRBs/SPs are increasingly doing more with less, supporting regional enterprises, industry engagement and agreement-making.

Our annual member survey confirmed what we hear consistently in our conversations with members, that native title compensation is the highest priority issue for our members. The next two highest order priorities for members were addressing requests for governance support and improving access to capital.

In response to member feedback, we revised the NNTC’s native title compensation strategy to focus on securing accessible pathways for Traditional Owners to access the tens of billions of compensation owed to them.

We are advocating for a National Compensation Framework so members can access compensation agreements without engaging in lengthy and costly court proceedings. We are also developing a proposal for a dedicated fund to ensure members can access compensation owned, including for future liabilities.

As the sector grows, we are increasing our capacity to meet our members’ needs. A key part of our national representative role is ensuring members’ priorities are heard by federal, state and local governments. In FY26, we held more than 640 meetings with members and represented their interests in more than 45 meetings with state and federal governments.

¹ The First Nations land estate is where First Nations people and communities have ownership, management or rights of use for customary purposes. See [ABARES \(2024\) Australia’s Indigenous land and forest estate](#).

We convened five regional forums, delivered five director training programs and regularly brought sector leaders together to share strategy. We hosted member events and trainings with partners in various locations across the country, including on Mer Island, Burketown, Townsville, Kalgoorlie and Broome.

We maintained our secretariat support for the First Nations Cultural Heritage Protection Alliance, to develop proposals for stronger cultural heritage laws.

In October 2025 we celebrated the NNTC’s 20th anniversary. We thank the Kurna Nations, who hosted us at Yitpi Yartapuultiku Aboriginal Cultural Centre in October to celebrate. The NNTC was formed when leaders from Native Title Representative Bodies came together to create a strong, united voice. Twenty years on, we are now an organisation of 24 staff representing 145 local members and 14 regional members.

Next year and in the years ahead, the NNTC will keep bringing members together to make decisions and exercise rights on our own terms.



Kado Muir
Chairperson



Jamie Lowe
Chief Executive Officer



Who we are and how we work

The National Native Title Council (NNTC) is the peak body representing and advocating for Traditional Owners and the native title sector across Australia.

Our mission is to champion members' rights and interests through advocacy, leadership and capacity building. We work to strengthen the rights and interests of native title holders and Traditional Owner organisations.

Our work is grounded in the rights of First Nations peoples to self-determination and participation in decisions that affect their communities, lands and waters.

We are guided by rights-based standards, including the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC).

How we work

Our work is member-led and achieves practical and systemic change across the native title system.

We bring Traditional Owner organisations together to share knowledge, identify common priorities and build collective power.

We design policy solutions, advocate for law reform and work with governments, industry and sector stakeholders for the benefit of native title rights holders. Our strategy is informed by the expertise and experiences of our members. We develop research, submissions and specialist advice to support and advance Traditional Owner rights.

We also provide practical resources, information, training and capacity-building opportunities to support members to exercise their rights and pursue their own priorities.

The NNTC 2023-28 Strategic Plan

Our work is guided by the NNTC 2023–28 Strategic Plan, which sets five strategic objectives for strengthening the rights, capability and influence of Traditional Owners and native title organisations:

- Powerful PBC-led Nations and Native Title Governance**
Strengthening the capacity, resourcing and influence of Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs) so they can effectively exercise native title rights, meet their obligations and support self-determination.
- Whole of Country Rights**
Advancing native title and broader rights to Country through law, policy and practice reform, including stronger protections for cultural heritage and better engagement between Traditional Owners and industry.
- Advancing Economic Empowerment**
Supporting native title holders and Traditional Owner organisations to overcome barriers to economic participation, pursue opportunities for wealth creation and secure fair compensation and economic outcomes.
- Closing the Gap – Land and Water Rights**
Working with First Nations partners through the Coalition of Peaks and other mechanisms to advance land and water rights and contribute to the implementation of the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.
- Enabling Treaty and Strong Agreements**
Supporting Traditional Owners to negotiate strong agreements that recognise their rights, protect their interests and provide a foundation for self-determination and lasting economic empowerment.



Our Members

The NNTC represents more than 150 Traditional Owner organisations, including Native Title Representative Bodies and Service Providers (NTRBs/SPs), Prescribed Bodies Corporate (PBCs).

Our members are at the heart of everything we do. Through Council and Board meetings, national and regional forums, workshops and working groups, members help set priorities, share expertise and shape the NNTC's national advocacy.

NTRBs/SPs work at the intersection of rights, governance and representation. NTRB/SP leadership in the regions informs the NNTC's national priorities.

The 2026 NNTC member survey gave us a clear picture of the priorities, challenges and support needs of our members.

Members identified native title compensation, PBC governance and compliance, and access to capital as their three highest priorities for the NNTC to progress.

When it comes to issues impacting members on the ground, our members told us insufficient operational funding remains a significant challenge, alongside increasing workloads and limited access to professional development. Survey results show that in-person member engagement with the NNTC remains high, with over 75 per cent of respondents having participated in an NNTC forum or event in the previous 12 months.

Member survey results highlighted the practical barriers members face in participating in the national agenda, particularly travel and geographical distance and limited staff capacity. In response, we are strengthening regular communication with members and continuing to develop a mix of face-to-face, online and hybrid opportunities that make it easier for members to participate, connect and shape our work.



FY26 Highlights

643

meetings, events and engagements across the native title sector.

300+

PBC, TOC, NTRB/SP members engaged in person.

82

Traditional Owner organisational leaders trained.

21

meetings with international partners.

3

Symposiums co-hosted with the Mabo Centre.

48

Engagements with elected government representatives.

17

Policy submissions on behalf of members.

10

Business leaders

implementing the Dhawura Ngilan Business and Investor Principles. This group includes BHP, Lendlease, HESTA, QIC, two commercial banks and a government financing agency.

5

PBC Regional Forums

hosted with Carpentaria Land Council Aboriginal Corporation, North Queensland Land Council, Kimberley Land Council, Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations and Native Title Services Goldfields

Weekly social media updates and member stories on NNTC LinkedIn and Instagram.

Stories of Impact

The following Stories of Impact highlight how the NNTC worked with members during 2025–26 to strengthen governance, build economic opportunities and support Traditional Owner-led priorities across the native title sector.

Strong Culture, Strong Futures: PBC success stories

Prescribed Bodies Corporate across Australia are enacting native title rights to deliver economic opportunities.

We launched the *Strong Culture, Strong Futures* short film storytelling project in 2025. The short films in the series document and showcase the work our members are doing to build their own economic futures.

Each film is produced in partnership with a Traditional Owner Organisation, documenting their governance systems, the jobs and enterprises they run, the cultural knowledge they protect and pass on, and the services they deliver to their wider communities. We partnered with members to deliver two short films this year.

Yaegl (Yamba, NSW)

The Yaegl film highlights the Yaegl Traditional Owner Corporation's native title journey including being the first group in NSW to be granted native title sea rights. The film shows how native title rights have allowed Yaegl to practice lore, language and culture and build self-sustaining businesses that create employment and deliver intergenerational impact.

The film explores the broad range of functions served by the PBC, from land and sea management to governance, economic development, and cultural practice. Watch the film on our website to see highlights from some of Yaegl's many successes from employing a growing workforce of 20 people including their Wadyarr Gargle Sea and Land contractors to their work with economic development around tourism and enterprise opportunities.



Yawuru (Rubibi/Broome, WA)

Yawuru Native Title Holders Aboriginal Corporation's native title journey shows what's possible when a PBC is resourced and self-determining. Strong governance, cultural leadership, and real outcomes for Country, community and prosperity.

Yawuru's story is grounded in Mabu Liyan (a strong, good and healthy spirit) achieved through healthy Country, strong community, practicing culture, and sound prosperity and governance.

The film highlights Yawuru's many successful initiatives including their ranger program, their language centre and some well-established business ventures including their cattle station and cattle export facility.

Head to the NNTC website to watch the films and learn more about the governance systems being built, jobs and enterprises being created, and the cultural knowledge protected and passed on.

Traditional Owner organisations go above and beyond to deliver for their communities. The stories of Yaegl and Yawuru Traditional Owner organisations show what can be done when members have ongoing funding certainty.

These are just two examples among many stories still to tell. The NNTC is hoping to profile more PBCs and feature their stories in 2026-27.

Building Strong PBC-led Nations

The NNTC delivers a four-day intensive director training program to equip First Nations leaders to leverage native title rights and lead their organisations.

In FY26, the NNTC delivered five PBC Director trainings in Yamba (NSW), Kalgoorlie (WA), Murray Bridge (SA), Perth (WA) and Broome (WA). Across the year, 82 participants took part in the program, bringing together directors from communities across the country.

Each four-day program was hands-on and immersive, covering legal obligations, financial governance and conflicts of interest. The program also covered leadership, facilitation and healing-informed practice, native title history, and how PBCs can exercise their rights and respond to future acts. Delivering the program in familiar, community-based settings created space for directors to engage openly with the material, share their experiences and learn from one another.

The strength of the program was reflected in the participation and connections built across the five locations. Directors had the opportunity to work through real-world governance challenges, share experiences from their own PBCs, and strengthen their knowledge, confidence and connections with other directors working across the native title sector.

By taking training directly to communities, the NNTC is helping build the capability of PBC directors to lead strong, effective governance on their own Country. Building on this momentum, the NNTC is developing a refreshed program for FY27 to further strengthen governance support for native title leaders across the continent.



20 Years of the NNTC

On 22 October 2025, the NNTC celebrated a significant milestone, our 20th anniversary. It has been twenty years since Traditional Owners first came together to build a national voice for native title rights holders.

Members, supporters, past leaders and government representatives gathered on Kurna Country in Port Adelaide, at Yitpi Yartapuultiku, a new Aboriginal Cultural Centre built by Kurna Custodians as a shared space for storytelling, art, culture and connection. The twilight event opened with a Smoking Ceremony and Welcome to Country followed by a First Nations Dance Troupe performance, acoustic music and an evening of celebration. Guests browsed the Blak Market, where local Aboriginal artists, designers and small businesses showcased fashion, textiles and jewellery, while sharing canapés and conversation.

Senator the Hon. Malarndirri McCarthy, federal Minister for Indigenous Australians sent a video message that was played for attendees.

In his keynote address, NNTC Chair Kado Muir traced the organisation's journey from a coalition of CEOs meeting informally after the abolition of ATSIC in 2005, through to today's membership of more than 150 Native Title Representative Bodies, Native Title Service Providers and Prescribed Bodies Corporate.

He paid tribute to the leaders who built the NNTC over two decades, founding Chair and CEO Brian Wyatt, first Executive Officer Bonita Mason, and the succession of Chairs who followed: Nolan Hunter, Francine McCarthy, Kevin Smith and others. Several inaugural representatives from the first 2005 meeting were present to mark the occasion.

Kado Muir reflected on what representation means for Traditional Owners, the power to drive the national agenda rather than react to it. Looking to the NNTC's next twenty years, he called on members to unite around shared priorities and advocate for a native title system that works for Traditional Owners, reaffirming that collective strength is what allows the NNTC to deliver for communities.



Our Impact

This section highlights some of the NNTC’s key project achievements over the past year. A strong focus of our work has been advancing Traditional Owners’ economic rights and supporting our members to pursue greater economic opportunity. Bringing our geographically dispersed membership together is also central to our role, helping to build connection and strengthen collective positions.

Native Title Representative Bodies and Service Provider leadership was particularly coordinated and impactful this year. Organisational leaders met quarterly to share insights, analysis and give the NNTC advice on strategy. NTRB/SPs are navigating an increasingly complex context supporting Traditional Owners to exercise rights and build capabilities. The policy engagement, representation and leadership delivered by NTRB/SPs supports outcomes across the sector.

This year we hosted the PBC Steering Group, five Regional Forums across Carpentaria, North Queensland, the Kimberley, Victoria and the Goldfields. We hosted full Council meetings, convened an NTRB/SP Leadership Group, led professional development sessions, webinars and engaged directly with PBC and NTRB/SP organisations and boards. Our team participated in NAIDOC week celebrations, the Garma festival and connected with members at the annual AIATSIS conference.

Members consistently told us native title compensation and sustainable funding are critical issues. The NNTC's work with the PBC Steering Group contributed to the Federal Government's commitment to an additional \$75 million for PBCs, announced by the Prime Minister at Garma 2025.

We progressed a National Compensation Strategy designed to give Traditional Owners clear pathways to access native title compensation they are owed when their native title rights are impacted or extinguished.

Our ongoing work strengthened Traditional Owner authority on water rights. We co-chaired the Closing the Gap Inland Waters Target Working Group and convened the 60 member Sea Country Alliance, giving Traditional Owners a stronger, coordinated voice in water and marine policy nationally and internationally.

Through the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance, we advanced reforms to strengthen cultural heritage protection. We worked with pilot organisations including BHP, Westpac and ANZ to embed the Dhawura Ngilan Principles into business practice.

On law reform, we engaged deeply with the ALRC’s Future Acts Review providing opportunities to develop proposals to improve the native title act. We advanced economic rights by developing access-to-capital initiatives, First Nations Funds research, and two region-specific PBC apps set to launch by year’s end. NNTC members’ work representing their communities is what self-determination looks like in action.

Working to secure and implement \$90 million new funding

Following sustained advocacy by the NNTC and the PBC Steering Group, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese announced an additional \$75 million for PBCs at the 2025 Garma Festival.

The NNTC has consistently advocated for long-term funding certainty for the native title sector, including PBCs. Traditional Owner organisations carry significant responsibilities and have been chronically underfunded for decades. We know investing in Traditional Owner organisations is a productivity multiplier, generating jobs, economic opportunity and stronger agreements.

Over the course of 2025-26 the NNTC worked with members through the PBC Steering Group to contribute to how this additional funding should be structured to meet the varied needs of PBCs. The NNTC convenes the PBC Steering Group, a diverse subset of NNTC PBC members from across Australia. The PBC Steering Group provides strong cultural and expert sector advice to the NNTC and Australian Government on national policy matters, including the funding reform process.

In May 2026 the \$75million investment was boosted to \$90 million over three years and represents an important step towards sustainable PBC operational funding. Yet the NNTC and PBC Steering Group recognise that further investment is required for the native title sector to continue and for native title to support the growth of strong, self-determining Nations.

In FY27, the NNTC will continue to work with our members to build on this progress and advocate for the investment needed to support strong and effective native title organisations.



Native Title Compensation

Native title compensation is consistently identified in member forums and meetings as a high order priority.

Many Traditional Owners face significant barriers in accessing the native title compensation they are legally owed. Tens of billions of dollars in compensation is likely owed to Traditional Owners. This represents tangible economic loss to communities.

Every new act that affects native title has the potential to add to future compensation liability, including critical minerals projects, housing subdivisions and diversification of pastoral leases.

With native title covering around half the country, new development across a significant part of Australia will continue to raise compensation issues unless the system is reformed.

In FY26, the NNTC redeveloped the National Native Title Compensation Strategy, a coordinated approach and a series of activities geared toward removing barriers to Traditional Owners accessing fair and efficient compensation outcomes.

Delivering more accessible pathways to compensation requires national coordination, driven by the NNTC, delivered through Representative Bodies and Service Providers, and delivering for PBCs across the country.

The NNTC is co-ordinating work to remove barriers to native title holders accessing the courts to pursue compensation that they are owed. We are working with leading practitioners from NTRB/SPs to develop new approaches to tenure analysis. We are also developing guidelines to help PBCs and the broader sector understand the steps involved in bringing a compensation claim. Other advisory resources are also being developed.

The NNTC maintained a strong program of engagement with NNTC members, including presentations at the AIATSIS summit and other industry conferences, offering professional development sessions for lawyers at NTRB/SPs, presenting to PBC boards and providing assistance to members on developing their own strategies to pursue compensation.

In 2027, the NNTC will be convening members to share compensation approaches and developing a proposal for the Commonwealth and states/territories to adopt the NNTC's National Compensation Framework. The Framework will provide a pathway to resolving compensation outside of the court. The NNTC will also push for a dedicated future fund so the Commonwealth can support states and territories to resolve compensation matters, now and in the future.



Kalgoorlie, Western Australia

Water

In 2025–26, the NNTC worked with members to advance Traditional Owner authority in water policy, planning and agreement-making. This work focused on strengthening genuine Traditional Owner decision-making and control.

Inland Water Targets

Over the past 12 months, the National Native Title Council (NNTC) has continued its national leadership on the Closing the Gap Inland Waters Target, which aims to increase Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ownership and control of inland water. In partnership with the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (DCCEEW), the NNTC co-chairs the Inland Waters Target Working Group and provides advice to the Joint Council on Closing the Gap.

The NNTC supports each state and territory to negotiate jurisdiction-specific targets with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisations. Our work focuses on improving access to water entitlements, strengthening Traditional Owner participation in water governance, and ensuring targets reflect both Indigenous rights and local water-management systems.

To inform this work, the NNTC has engaged extensively with the Coalition of Peaks, its Inland Waters Caucus and Traditional Owner organisations across Australia. It also works with governments to build stronger relationships, clarify partnership obligations and support meaningful participation in negotiations.

This partnership helps bridge the gap between Traditional Owners as rights holders and those who hold water licences. It is increasingly important as climate change places greater pressure on inland waters. By creating a trusted forum for discussions about water use, ownership and management, the NNTC is helping advance equitable water reform and self-determination. Negotiations are expected to be finalised by November 2026.



Fingal Head, New South Wales
Bunjalung Country

Sea Country Alliance

In FY26, the NNTC continued to convene the Sea Country Alliance as a national member-led forum for Traditional Owner rights and interests in coastal and offshore waters. With 60 foundation and associate members, the Alliance provided a coordinated platform for members to identify shared policy priorities, raise emerging concerns and advance regulatory reform affecting sea Country.

During the year, the Alliance contributed to national and international policy processes through submissions to:

- the United Nations Human Rights Council Advisory Committee call for inputs on sea-level rise and human rights
- the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre Marine Spatial Planning Framework
- the National Assessment Guidelines for Offshore Carbon Capture and Sequestration under the Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981 (Cth)
- the Department of Industry, Science and Resources Offshore Decommissioning and Financial Assurance Reforms.

This work strengthened the Alliance's role as a collective voice for Traditional Owners and supported member-led advocacy for decision-making processes that recognise rights and enduring connections to coastal and offshore waters.



Cultural Heritage

Strengthening cultural heritage protection laws

Australia’s Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural heritage protection framework is in urgent need of reform. The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Heritage Protection Act 1984 has not been substantially updated in 40 years. It operates as backstop legislation and has repeatedly failed to protect First Nations cultural heritage.

The destruction of the 46,000-year-old Juukan Gorge rock shelters in 2020 exposed these failures and underscored the need for nationally consistent, First Nations-led reform.

Since 2022, the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance had a formal partnership with the Australian Government to co-design a new approach to cultural heritage protection.

The Alliance conducted 116 consultations and engagements in FY26 to progress the reform agenda and inform ongoing policy discussions with government. The Alliance also presented at the National Gathering and the AIATSIS conference in 2025.

The proposed reforms would:

- establish a First Nations Engagement Standard, similar to that proposed in the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999
- provide a clear model for determining which Traditional Owner groups proponents should engage
- streamline processes for cultural heritage protection declarations
- strengthen penalties and enforcement

The Alliance continues to work closely with the Australian Government to progress these reforms and deliver stronger protection for cultural heritage.

About the First Nations Cultural Heritage Protection Alliance

The FNHPA is the largest group of Traditional Owner organisations ever convened on a single issue. The NNTC is the secretariat for the Alliance, which brings together Native Title bodies, Land Councils, Aboriginal Corporations, NACCHO, the Coalition of Peaks and represents more than 100 First Nations organisations.

Dhawura Ngilan Business and Investor Initiative

The First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance continued to advance the Dhawura Ngilan (Remembering Country) Business and Investor Initiative, a First Nations led framework supporting businesses and investors to respect cultural heritage and uphold the right to free, prior and informed consent.

Throughout 2025-26, the Alliance supported businesses and investors to implement the Dhawura Ngilan Principles through a combination of pilot partnerships, training workshops and targeted engagement at national and Traditional Owner forums.

The Alliance worked closely with 10 pilot organisations to support implementation of the Dhawura Ngilan Principles into their governance, due diligence, and operations. Participating organisations included BHP, Lendlease, HESTA, QIC, Silva Capital, Westpac, ANZ, Clean Energy Finance Corporation, Alphinity Investment Management and Tilt Renewables.

In November 2025, the Alliance convened a Pilot Gathering, providing a forum for participating organisations to share practical implementation experiences and contribute to the development of recommendations for scaling the Initiative. Insights from the pilot program will inform the next phase of the Initiative and support broader adoption of the Dhawura Ngilan Principles across Australia’s business and investment community.



Native Title Reform



The NNTC is leading engagement within the native title sector to participate in the Australian Law Reform Commission's Future Acts Review. The NNTC was a key partner for the Australian Government in developing the Future Act review and terms of reference for the Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC).

During FY26, the NNTC worked closely with legal experts from the NTRB/SPs and members to ensure the ALRC's final report takes into consideration the experiences of native title holders and practitioners.

Following the Future Act Symposium, co-hosted by the NNTC and Mabo Centre in June 2025, the two organisations developed a comprehensive submission to the review.

In FY27, the ALRC report will be released and the NNTC will continue engagement and advocacy to develop actions for legislative and policy change to improve the future acts system for native title holders.

Clean energy and critical minerals

In 2025-2026 the NNTC continued to strengthen partnerships in the clean energy and critical minerals sector, with a focus on ensuring Traditional Owners and their representative bodies are well positioned to participate in emerging opportunities and protect their rights and interests as the industry develops.

A key initiative has been the Critical Minerals Collaborative Research Project, undertaken in partnership with the University of Queensland. This project aims to better understand lessons from agreement-making in the critical mineral sector and develop practical, accessible resources to support PBCs and NTRB/SPs navigating critical minerals projects on Country.

The NNTC also supported the Towards an Australian First Nations Critical Minerals Strategy Symposium, hosted in partnership with the Mabo Centre and AEMEE. The Symposium brought together Traditional Owners, NTRB/SPs, researchers, industry and other stakeholders to share knowledge, perspectives and experiences, and to consider the opportunities and challenges presented by the critical minerals sector.

The NNTC continues to work with members and partners to strengthen Traditional Owner knowledge, capacity and influence in the clean energy and critical minerals space. This includes supporting members to respond to emerging projects and opportunities, sharing knowledge and experience, and ensuring Traditional Owner voices remain central to discussions about the future development of critical minerals and clean energy on Country.

Keep an eye out on the NNTC website for critical minerals resources for our members.



Photo by Jeremy Bishop on Unsplash

Economic Empowerment

The NNTC’s advocacy and project work progressing Traditional Owner economic rights has continued at pace in FY26.

In addition to the Compensation and PBC Funding streams, we collaborate across the public, industry and not-for-profit sectors to allow members to take full advantage of economic development opportunities.

Economic policy reform and the First Nations Economic Partnership

The Government, along with the Coalition of Peaks and the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance, signed the First Nations Economic Partnership in September 2025. The Partnership is advancing reforms to strengthen First Nations economic participation and consider the policy reform needed to support local economic opportunities.

During FY26, the NNTC is an active member of the First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance and a key participant in this important policy work. We continue to advocate on behalf of members through the Partnership’s three working groups: Access to Capital and Institutional Arrangements; Employment and Career Pathways; and the First Nations Economic Framework steering committee.

The Commonwealth Treasury has published the Partnership’s forward work schedule and terms of reference for these working groups on its website. These set out policy priorities and help drive coordinated action across the Commonwealth.

Traditional Owner Equity Fund

Our members regularly report that access to finance is one of their top priorities.

In FY26, we partnered with the NAB Foundation to design a Traditional Owner Guarantor Fund and investigate whether a private loan guarantee could replicate some of the benefits realised by First Nations in Canada through cheaper access to debt funding.

After progressing the model through over 80 engagements across the First Nations, finance, industry and government sectors, we found a better pathway forward and changed direction. In FY27 we will leverage the knowledge and networks gained to further a private equity model.

The proposed Fund would operate as a pooled investment vehicle, raising capital from investors including First Nations funds, banks and other impact-minded investors. It would purchase equity stakes in major projects on behalf of Traditional Owners and offer those stakes back for purchase when Traditional Owner organisations are ready, while working with them to build the capacity to manage the stakes and the wealth they generate over time.

As a market-building vehicle, the Fund would bring private capital into support of First Nations economic development and self-determination. In 2027 we are looking to secure seed funding to deliver the First Nations-Led fund.

First Nations Fund Management

First Nations trusts and related structures collectively hold a significant and growing pool of capital, typically on behalf of Traditional Owners exercising their Native Title rights.

Yet there is limited consolidated information on the nature of the sector, how capital is invested, or the experience and aspirations of rights-holders.

The NNTC is partnering with Impact Seed to conduct qualitative and quantitative research into the First Nations Funds sector. This work will help ensure that the First Nations Funds sector supports First Nations economic development and nation building. It will investigate how First Nations Funds are structured and invested, the experiences of Rights-holders, and opportunities to strengthen First Nations institutional investment. We anticipate the report will be published in mid-2027.



PBC Regional Forums

In FY26, the NNTC continued to deliver PBC Regional Forums across the country, creating practical opportunities for PBC Directors and representatives to connect, share knowledge and contribute to national advocacy. Five regional forums were delivered during the year in partnership with regional hosts:

- Carpentaria region with Carpentaria Land Council
- North Queensland region with North Queensland Land Council
- Kimberley region with the Kimberley Land Council
- Victoria with the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations
- Goldfields region with Native Title Services Goldfields

The regional forums provide a valuable opportunity for PBCs to learn from each other and hear about the support, governance and economic opportunities to assist them in developing their individual organisations.

The forums provide an opportunity for PBCs to learn from each other directly and present on their individual successes. Bringing PBCs together to share knowledge and best practice clearly builds capacity of individual PBCs. The forums also give PBCs the opportunity to hear about national issues.

In 2027, the NNTC will be refreshing the PBC Regional Forum project to better support local and regional needs.



PBC Mobile Apps

Following the success of Central Land Council's PBC Mob app, the NNTC has further developed pilot apps in each of the north Queensland and Torres Strait regions with North Queensland Land Council (NQLC) and Gur A Baradharaw Kod (GBK) respectively.

The apps support PBCs to build their knowledge of rights and responsibilities of native title in their region. The apps are region-specific to ensure they meet local needs while providing clear information to native title holders on rights, legal and governance obligations.

The PBC apps hold publicly available information so that native title holders have everything they need on their personal device in easy-to-understand English and local languages. The apps work offline for regions with connection issues and internet outages.

The Apps will be used as a learning tool to better understand native title, the role of PBCs and the roles and responsibilities of Directors.

The two new apps launch in FY27 and will be available free for download from the App Store and Google Play.



Partnerships and Alliances

Much of the NNTC's work is achieved through the alliances and partnerships we hold across the native title sector, government, industry and with civil society groups. Through these partnerships, we extend the reach of our advocacy, build shared expertise, and strengthen outcomes for Traditional Owners.

The NNTC is the secretariat for

- First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance:** a coalition of more than 100 member organisations including major Traditional Owner, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community-Controlled Organisations, working to strengthen and modernise cultural heritage laws.
- Sea Country Alliance:** an alliance between Traditional Owners with responsibility for Sea Country committed to safeguarding sea country and marine environments.
- PBC Steering Group:** helping to empower Traditional Owners with greater decision-making authority over their Country and ensuring native title policy aligns with the priorities of PBCs and First Nations communities.



The NNTC is a partner with

- Mabo Centre:** an Indigenous-led research and training centre focused on advancing Indigenous leadership and improving economic outcomes for communities through land and sea rights.
- Dhawura Ngilan Business and Investor Initiative:** led by the First Nations Heritage Protection Alliance with Responsible Investment Association Australasia (RIAA) and UN Global Compact Network Australia, equipping businesses and investors with the resources to adopt leading practice in cultural heritage.

The NNTC is a member of

- First Nations Economic Empowerment Alliance:** a coalition of Indigenous leaders working to transform Indigenous economic opportunity in Australia.
- Coalition of Peaks:** more than 80 peak bodies delivering the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, with the NNTC as lead peak for economic development and land and waters outcomes.
- Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance (IRMA):** supporting a mining industry that respects the rights of affected communities and minimises environmental harm.

The Mabo Centre

The Mabo Centre is a national First Nations research and training centre dedicated to empowering Traditional Owners to fully realise their land and sea rights for the economic benefit of the communities they lead. The Centre was launched in 2025 as a partnership between the University of Melbourne and the NNTC.

The Centre's research program has been designed in partnership with Traditional Owners to inform policy development for long-term systemic change across the sector.

Symposium series

The Centre's symposium series, hosted in partnership with the NNTC, convened critical discussions on resources industry standards schemes, a First Nations critical minerals strategy, and recommendations for native title reform. These events engaged 450 individuals from organisations spanning every state and territory, establishing the Centre as an independent facilitator of cross-sector dialogue where native title holders, industry leaders, policymakers and academics convene. Knowledge gathered at each symposium will continue to inform Centre research outputs for the year ahead.

Treaty forum

In partnership with the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owners (FVTOC) and First Nations Legal and Research Services (FNLRS), the Centre co-hosted a Treaty Forum attended by 25 representatives from nine Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations. The forum was a reminder of the power of gathering to listen and share knowledge.

Policy leadership

Over the past year, the Centre has jointly produced six policy submissions alongside the NNTC, including a review of the future acts regime and proposed amendments to the Native Title Act, and appeared alongside the NNTC at sector public hearings and Parliamentary Inquiries. Centre staff also presented at the 2026 AIATSIS Summit, connecting directly with native title holders to understand their needs and the challenges they face.



Looking to 2027

The Mabo Centre will build on this year's momentum with a growing training and research agenda. The redevelopment of the Treaties, Agreements and Negotiated Settlements (ATNS) database will strengthen capacity building for Traditional Owners with limited funding and resources. A major research project on the application of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) is underway, with an occasional paper series responding to FPIC and other emerging sector topics due in 2027.

The Centre's new Eminent Visiting Fellow program will bring First Nations academics, scholars and community leaders into its research program, ensuring First Nations knowledge and cultural authority remain central to its work. Alongside the NNTC, the Centre will continue to deliver PBC Director training and cultural heritage and native title law seminars, working toward a full program of accredited learning pathways for native title holders and future PBC leaders.

The Mabo Centre stands as a contemporary continuation of Eddie Mabo's legacy, translating historical legal rights into current-day power for Traditional Owners.



The National Gathering 2025

In September 2025, the Council of First Nations convened the first National Gathering in Port Douglas. More than 300 Traditional Owner delegates, representing over 160 Nations, organisations and communities from across the continent came together as an assembly of existing cultural authority.



Delegates were sent to represent the collective interests of their Traditional Owner organisations. Over three days delegates explored the need for a national representative body, considered different governance models, and learned from international speakers.

What emerged was a clear and desire for national representation. Delegates supported in-principle the establishment of a new national body. A body that is independent, culturally grounded, and accountable to First Nations rather than governments.

Delegates committed to returning to their organisations and communities to share outcomes and test support. Attendees at the Gathering set the design principles a new representative body: Attendees said a new body should be:

- elected on the basis of Nations, grounded in cultural authority;
- inclusive of Elders, women and young people.
- financially independent from government.
- transparent and accountable.



An interim leadership group holds responsibility to take the process forward on a transitional basis, until a Traditional Owner nominated and elected board is appointed through a culturally grounded process.

The NNTC provided in-kind support for the National Gathering. We support the establishment of a new national body because we know that when Traditional Owners come together to build collective representation, it strengthens all of our organisations.



Bringing our members together

As a member-led organisation, the NNTC engages with members on their priorities and needs every day of the week. Our priorities and projects are informed by our members. Facilitating collective decision-making is one of our core functions. We regularly convene member-led governance forums. Member governance meetings for FY26 are outlined in the tables below.

Year at a glance

5	5	6	2
Regional forums	PBC Director trainings	Board meetings	Council meetings
2	2	8	1
PBC Steering Group meetings	NTRB/SP CEO Forums	FNHPA Leadership Working Group meetings	Annual General meeting

Member leadership

Date	Forum	Location
4 August 2025	PBC Steering Group	Mer Island
22 October 2025	PBC Steering Group	Adelaide
23 October 2025	NNTC Council	Adelaide
12 February 2026	NTRB/SP CEO Forum	Naarm (Melbourne)
13 February 2026	NNTC Council	Naarm (Melbourne)
14-15 May 2026	NTRB/SP CEO Forum	Naarm (Melbourne)

The NNTC Board met six times during the year. Members gathered in Adelaide on 23 October 2025 for the Annual General Meeting.

Date	Meeting
24 July 2025	NNTC Board Meeting
20 August 2025	NNTC Board Meeting
3 September 2025	NNTC Board Meeting
23 October 2025	Annual General Meeting (Adelaide)
16 December 2025	NNTC Board Meeting
27 March 2026	NNTC Board Meeting
26 May 2026	NNTC Board Meeting



Regional Forums

Date	Host	Location
29-30 July 2025	CLCAC	Burketown
26-27 August 2025	NQLC	Townsville
25-26 November 2025	KLC	Rubibi (Broome)
19-20 May 2026	FVTOC	Naarm (Melbourne)
17-18 June 2026	NTSG	Kalgoorlie

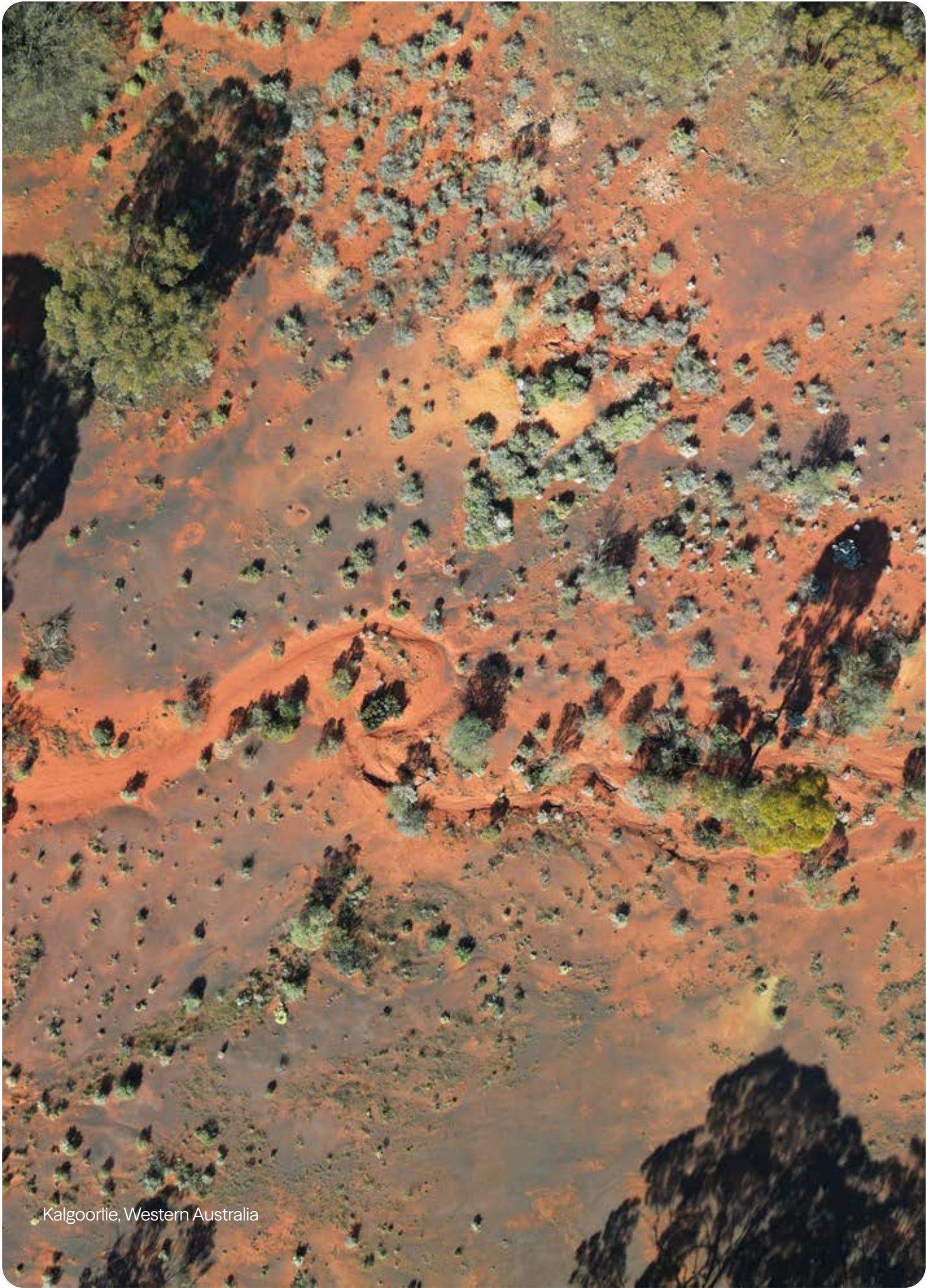
PBC Director Trainings

Date	Training	Location
15 July 2025	Yamba PBC Director Training	Yamba
23 September 2025	Goldfields PBC Director Training	Kalgoorlie
13 October 2025	Murray Bridge PBC Director Training	Murray Bridge
12 May 2026	Perth PBC Director Training	Perth
22 June 2026	Broome PBC Director Training	Rubibi (Broome)

Submissions

The NNTC regularly represents members interests in government inquiries and policy development processes. Below is a summary of the submissions published this financial year.

Date	Submission
30 June 2026	NNTC and The Mabo Centre submission to the <i>Inquiry on Creating sustainable economic growth in rural and regional Australia</i> of the Joint Standing Committee on Trade & Investment Growth (Cth)
30 June 2026	NNTC submission on the <i>Consultation draft – Fitzroy-Derby water resources management plan: policy and guidance</i> from the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (WA)
10 June 2026	NNTC submission to the <i>Inquiry into WIPO Treaty on Intellectual Property, Genetic Resources and Associated Traditional Knowledge</i> of the Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (Cth)
30 May 2026	NNTC and The Mabo Centre submission to the <i>Inquiry into factors shaping social licence and economic development outcomes in critical minerals projects across Australia</i> of the House Standing Committee on Primary Industries (Cth)
30 April 2026	Sea Country Alliance submission to the <i>Call for inputs on sea-level rise and human rights</i> by the United Nations Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (Int'l)
30 April 2026	NNTC submission to the <i>Call for inputs on legal enforcement of ESC rights</i> by the United Nations Human Rights Council Advisory Committee (Int'l)
30 April 2026	NNTC submission to the <i>Inquiry into racism, hate and violence directed at Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</i> of the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs (Cth)[
20 March 2026	NNTC submission on the <i>Country Visit to Australia</i> of the Special Rapporteur on the rights of Indigenous Peoples to the United Nations Human Rights Council (Int'l)
2 February 2026	NNTC submission on <i>The Future Made in Australia Community Benefit Principles public guidance</i> to the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (Cth)
18 December 2025	Sea Country Alliance submission on <i>Offshore Decommissioning and Financial Assurance Reforms</i> to the Department of Industry, Science and Resources (Cth)
25 November 2025	NNTC and The Mabo Centre submission to the <i>Attorney General's Department's Evaluation of (the 2021) amendments to the Native Title Act 1993</i> of the Attorney Generals department (Cth)
21 October 2025	NNTC submission on the <i>DRAFT IRMA Standard for Responsible Exploration, Extraction, and Processing of Minerals v2.0 (Standard v2)</i> to the Initiative for Responsible Mining Assurance
10 September 2025	Sea Country Alliance response to the <i>National Assessment Guidelines for Offshore Carbon Capture and Sequestration under the Environment Protection (Sea Dumping) Act 1981 (Cth)</i> to the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (Cth)
27 August 2025	Sea Country Alliance advice to the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre <i>Marine Spatial Planning Framework</i>
5 August 2025	Sea Country Alliance response to the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre <i>Marine Spatial Planning Framework</i>
24 July 2025	NNTC and The Mabo Centre submission to the <i>Australian Law Reform Commission Review of the Future Act Regime – Discussion Paper (Cth)</i>



Kalgoorlie, Western Australia

Our Board

The NNTC Board provides governance and strategic direction, drawing on the knowledge and leadership of Traditional Owners across the country.



Kado Muir
Chairperson
Ngalia dialect of the
Mantjiltjara language group



Ned David
Director
Kulkalaig



Joshua Haynes
Director
Yandruwanha Yawarawarka



Patricia Laurie
Director
Yaegl/Bundjalung



Peter Windie
Director
Thudgari



Kaylene Malthouse
Director
Yidinji/Nadagion



Kenneth Stewart
Director
Wamba Wamba



Bradley Saunders
Director
Gunggari



Tyronne Garstone
Director
Bardi

In Loving Memory Mr. Farmer

It is with great sadness that we acknowledge the passing of our respected Board Member, Mr. Farmer.

Mr. Farmer, a Martu man from Jigalong/Wiluna, was deeply committed to advancing the rights and interests of Traditional Owners and strengthening the native title sector. He was often the one who travelled the furthest to attend our meetings, and we greatly valued the time, effort, knowledge and experience he shared with us. He was a quiet and caring person who was always generous and engaging.

It was a privilege to work alongside him. His contribution to the National Native Title Council will be proudly remembered, and he will be deeply missed.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to Mr. Farmer's family, friends and community.

Rest peacefully, Mr. Farmer.



Our Team

Our team brings together deep experience and a shared commitment to advancing the rights and interests of Traditional Owners and native title holders. The following page introduces our staff employed by the NNTC during this financial year.

Jamie Lowe Chief Executive Officer	Belinda Burbidge Chief Operating Officer	Clinton Benjamin Director of Native Title	Anirudha Nagar Director of Clean Energy and Finance
Jessica Kendall Director of Strategic Communications	Jack Faine Principal Lawyer	Alexandra Hill Director of Policy	Carolyn Betts Senior Executive Officer
Courtney Morgan Senior Executive Officer	Debby Lovett Training Manager	Chontarle Bellottie Senior Project Officer	Melita Virginie HR Manager
Tom Widdup Engagement Strategy Advisor	Tobias Beckmann Economist	Jasmine Yarran Senior Governance Officer	Emily Robinson Senior Communications Advisor
Chelsie Collard Senior Policy Advisor	Riley Dolman Engagement Coordinator	Kelly Dalgety Engagement Coordinator	Jaidah Lowe Project Officer
Stacey Ryder Project Officer	Anne-Sophie Etheve Finance Officer	Xena Atkins Legal Policy Officer	Devereau Booth Legal Policy Officer
Rashin Eftekhari Executive Assistant			



Lake Corangamite, Victoria
Eastern Maar Country

Financials

Financial summary

Statutory accounting of income and expenditure for the year ended 30 June 2026. This is an extract of our audited financial statements.

INCOME	FY26 (\$)	FY25 (\$)
Membership fees	225,000	225,000
Grants and philanthropy	5,584,946	6,154,669
Other income*	3,203,063	777,130
Interest income	109,320	128,355
Total income	9,122,329	7,285,154

EXPENDITURE	FY26 (\$)	FY25 (\$)
Total employee costs	4,170,334	3,109,903
Depreciation	192,199	55,013
Other expenses	4,714,865	3,780,072
Total operating expenses	9,077,398	6,944,988

Net surplus / (deficit)	44,931	340,166
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*Other income includes grant income for multi-year projects, auspice grants, and other operational income for services rendered.



Balance sheet

Statement of financial position as at 30 June 2026.

ASSETS	FY26 (\$)	FY25 (\$)
Current Assets		
Cash and equivalents	5,870,473	4,534,861
Trade and other receivables	46,750	336,749
Other	214,028	43,450
Total Current Assets	6,131,251	4,915,060
Non-Current Assets		
Computer equipment	54,874	56,869
Furniture	13,733	15,850
Office equipment	5,230	4,702
ROU assets	389,525	304,582
Total Non-Current Assets	463,362	382,003
Total Assets	6,594,613	5,297,063

LIABILITIES	FY26 (\$)	FY25 (\$)
Current Liabilities		
Trade and Other Payables	4,061,968	2,946,519
Employee leave provisions	514,881	335,735
Total Current Liabilities	4,576,848	3,282,254
Non-Current Liabilities	294,523	336,498
Net Assets	1,723,242	1,678,311

EQUITY	FY26 (\$)	FY25 (\$)
Retained profit/accumulated earnings	1,723,242	1,678,311
Total Equity	1,723,242	1,678,311

What’s next

In FY27, the NNTC will continue supporting members to convert native title rights into economic opportunities on Country. This work is increasingly urgent as Australia enters a major investment cycle in critical minerals, clean energy and regional infrastructure. More than 60 per cent of projects in the current critical minerals pipeline are located on native title land.

In the year ahead, the NNTC will advance laws and policies that enable Traditional Owners to participate as partners in this investment cycle and build long-term wealth. Industry increasingly recognises the value of early agreement-making, which supports faster approvals, greater project certainty and lowers risk.

We will continue advocating for a National Compensation Framework to provide fair and timely out-of-court processes for Traditional Owners to access unpaid compensation, supported by a Compensation Fund to ensure Traditional Owners and proponents have the capacity to reach fair agreements. We will continue making the case for a First Nations-led Private Equity Fund, giving Traditional Owners access to the capital they need to invest in projects. Our focus on water rights will likely expand to respond to member needs and priorities. We are piloting a Youth Program to support a pipeline of native title leaders in the sector.

Alongside our members, we will also advocate for funding certainty for the native title sector, so that NTRB/SPs and PBCs can plan for the future. The NNTC looks forward to working with members, governments and industry in FY27.





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[National Native Title Council](https://www.linkedin.com/company/national-native-title-council)



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The NNTC 2025-2026 Annual Report was designed internally by Emily Robinson, Gunai-Gunditjmara woman.