

Media Release

Ms Harriet Shing MLC

Parliamentary Secretary for Creative Industries

Parliamentary Secretary for Equality

Parliamentary Secretary for Water



Wednesday, 9 February 2022

TRADITIONAL OWNER LEADERSHIP FOR GIPPSLAND LAKES

The first Traditional Owner representative to be appointed as chair of the Gippsland Lakes Coordinating Committee has been announced by the Andrews Labor Government.

Parliamentary Secretary for Water Harriet Shing today welcomed new members and independent Chairperson Glenys Watts to the committee. It's the first time a Traditional Owner has been appointed to chair the committee, with the appointment reflecting the Government's commitment to supporting Aboriginal leadership.

Ms Watts – who brings a wealth of knowledge and experience – currently sits on the board of the East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority and Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation and is the current Chairperson of the Gunaikurnai Traditional Owner Land Management Board.

Dr Jessica Reeves, Katherine Mullet and Christine Wrench are the three new appointments, while Arthur Allen has been reappointed for a second term. The committee members have a wide range of skills, experiences, and deep connections to local community-led projects.

Agency representatives from East Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority, Parks Victoria, and the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation will join the committee members.

Over the next three years, the committee will oversee the expenditure of \$7.5 million allocated in the 2020/21 Victorian State Budget to continue improving the health of the lakes through on-the-ground management actions and community engagement.

The committee will be guided by the Gippsland Lakes Priorities Plan, Gippsland Lakes Ramsar Site Management Plan, Gunaikurnai Whole-of-Country-Plan and the East and West Gippsland Regional Waterway strategies.

The committee was formed in 2015 by the Labor Government to help coordinate community and agency efforts to maintain or improve the environmental health of the Gippsland Lakes by prioritising investment and overseeing programs.

Targeted recruitment for a recreational water user member will now begin.

Quotes attributable to Parliamentary Secretary for Water Harriet Shing

"First Peoples leadership is critical to make sure our waterways and the communities that rely on them are prepared for a climate challenged future."

"I welcome all the new committee members and I'm excited to work with them to secure this precious waterway for generations to come."

Quote attributable to GLCC Chairperson Glenys Watts

"I am very pleased to chair this committee as the Gippsland Lakes is a significant place for Gunaikurnai people."