

# MEDIA STATEMENT



15 June 2022

## Caring for Country is self-determination enacted

“We acknowledge our inherent rights granted to us by our Ancestors to care for Country. Our Recognition and Settlement Agreement supports Dja Dja Wurrung self-determination to further instil our land management and cultural practices across Country.”

- Trent Nelson, Chairperson DJAARA

The cultural interests of Dja Dja Wurrung People are protected through their inclusive and representative Traditional Owner Corporation, DJAARA (Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation).

In 2013, the State of Victoria entered into a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) with DJAARA. This recognises their inherent and fundamental rights of access to, ownership and management of Country; and provides decision-making rights in relation to the use and development of land or natural resources on Country.

Self-determination is Aboriginal Peoples making decisions about all things that affect their lives. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples seeks specifically to protect the unique cultural and spiritual connection to Country that we have. It recognises our right to our Country and the resources we have traditionally owned, occupied or otherwise used or acquired.

As a Traditional Owner corporation, representative and inclusive of all Dja Dja Wurrung People, it is our right to self-determine and it is our responsibility to use that self-determination to heal Country. The RSA provides statutory support of these rights and provides DJAARA with management rights over some areas of Country. The Wombat State Forest is, in part, included in this area.

In recognition of this fundamental requirement of wellbeing for community through practicing culture and healthy Country, DJAARA is undertaking remediation and reparation works in the Wombat State Forest. We will apply the principles of Forest Gardening to ensure that all plants and animals on Country have the environment they need to thrive.

Forest Gardening is our contemporary philosophy and practice of managing cultural landscapes. The language of ‘Forest Gardening’ is used to communicate how Dja Dja Wurrung People interact with the environment. As a concept, Forest Gardening seeks to bring Dja Dja Wurrung worldviews and present an approach to managing Country in partnership within a contemporary context. Our vision of forest gardening looks 10, 50, 200 years out and beyond.

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