

MEDIA STATEMENT



Friday 3 June 2022

We are grieving for Country



“While Country is broken, we too cannot heal. As Traditional Owners, we experience our environment to the core of our beings, in our very spirit. The health of Country affects the wellbeing of our communities. Making Country safe provides safety for all on Country.”

- Rodney Carter, Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO

Dja Dja Wurrung People are experiencing profound grief at the damage inflicted on Country by the storms in June and October last year. The stormfronts impacted 80,000 hectares of forest and 1,500km of road network, affecting landscape, Cultural Heritage and industry in the area. The scale of this damage created significant risks in increased bushfire conditions, limited recreational use of the area and impacted cultural use by Traditional Owners. Safety on Country became the priority.

The site of trees that have stood for generations, now lying on the forest floor, is distressing for many in the community. On this scale, it is unnatural and it is deeply upsetting. It is also a fire risk that places the health of the whole forest in danger. This must be managed quickly and with sensitivity to the broader forest environment.

Dja Dja Wurrung People have managed these forests for tens of thousands of years. We have inherited the responsibility to care and the knowledge of how to care for this Country and return it to health. Making it safe is the first step in this intergenerational process of healing.

In this week of reconciliation, we are pleased to be working with VicForests to be brave and make change on Country. Together we are making the forest safe so that our People can remediate Country in a culturally appropriate way, in accordance with the principles of Forest Gardening. Together we are being brave and making change on Country.

We share with you the ravaged Country so that we can work together on healing.

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