

MEDIA STATEMENT



20 July 2022

In healing Country, we practice culture and we heal community

As Djaara, Dja Dja Wurrung people, we take seriously our cultural obligations to care for and heal Country. We have heard the call of a damaged Country in the Wombat State Forest and are applying our ancient principles of forest gardening to heal this Country damaged by storms in 2021.

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. Traditional Owners managing Country speaks to the health of community that we can overcome the sometimes crippling effects of colonisation to seek change through imposed systems of government and bureaucracy.

It was essential that windthrown timber was cleared and safety restored for all those that live on Country. From apex predators through to lichen, Country cannot heal until the habitat and safety of all who traverse and live on Country is considered. That is our way and that is what we call Forest Gardening.

As with all work to be undertaken by the corporation, we look for those people with experience and expertise, coupled with respect for our responsibility to take care of Country. The provision of this, on such a scale, was limited and DJAARA was pleased to appoint VicForests to undertake making Country safe. We continue to protect Country through this process by embedding both Dja Dja Wurrung People and the principles of Forest Gardening within the VicForests team undertaking the work to make Country safe.

As we manage the care and healing of the Wombat State Forest, it is important that our active role in undertaking and managing these works to heal Country is acknowledged as an action of self-determination and our inherited experience from over 40,000 years of forest management is respected.