

## **Yilingga Marna Signing Ceremony: DJAARA & City of Greater Bendigo**

### **Speeches:**

DJAARA Board Chair Trent Nelson

Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Rodney Carter

### **DJAARA Board Chair, Trent Nelson**

- We're here today to formally sign and celebrate a unique agreement between our two organisations – Yilingga Marna – which means to 'shake hands' in our Dja Dja Wurrung language.
- This agreement has come about through negotiation over several years in the spirit of goodwill and a mutually beneficial outcome.
- Significantly, it's the first agreement of its kind (between Traditional Owners and local government) in Australia
- It provides a clear and very tangible path for us all to move forward in the process of reconciliation and towards self-determination for Dja Dja Wurrung People.
- When we first looked hard at agreement-making a few years ago, we learned that the main factor behind successful agreements was an individual taking personal responsibility for securing a just outcome.
- I'd like to acknowledge Andrew Cooney at the City, who has done exactly that throughout the development of Yilingga Marna agreement.
- Andrew has led the City in finding a way to ensure all the people of Bendigo are winners.
- I'd also like to acknowledge our DJAARA General Manager Cassandra Lewis who capably led DJAARA's engagement with the City.
- The rapport that Cassie introduced, and the integrity, trust and curiosity that she brought to the engagement was key to the success of the

process.

- Yilingga Marna recognises the unique status and rights of my people, the Dja Dja Wurrung People as Traditional Owners and acknowledges the past.
- This milestone agreement will make a difference in people's daily lives and in the administration of our rights.
- Under the agreement, City Councillors and DJAARA Board Directors will meet regularly to discuss matters of mutual importance.
- Our two organisations are committed to working towards a Treaty-like agreement.
- We recognise the step that the City of Greater Bendigo is taking today. It's a significant step for reconciliation, and a recognition of the healing power of partnership.
- It builds on existing mutual trust and respect between DJAARA and the City, and takes agreement-making between our organisations to a new level.
- I congratulate all involved on this genuine peace deal, that I hope will lead to similar agreements being made – both here on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, and across the nation.

## **Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO, Rodney Carter**

- This agreement that we're here to sign today is significant, because it lifts the relationship between DJAARA and the City out of the 19th century and to something that is respectable in the 21st century.
- The discussions that led to Yilingga Marna began after the 2019 High Court decision (*Timber Creek*), which decided how Traditional Owners should be compensated for the impact of activities on their land.
- In fact, the *Timber Creek* decision still left both DJAARA and the City with a great deal of uncertainty about how to calculate the Dja Dja Wurrung community benefit for the use of our land.
- It prompted a conversation about how Council-led projects could deliver on the legal entitlements of the DDW people and maximise benefits to the entire community.
- The existing Land Use Activity Agreement in our 2013 Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria was cumbersome to work with – for the City and for DJAARA.
- Together, we have worked collaboratively and in genuine partnership to come up with our own unique solution, which we believe will work better for both of us and the communities we service.
- It's a 12-month agreement – and the relationship that it reflects and enables means we can renegotiate as required to make sure it continues to work for mutual benefit.
- We're confident that it creates, not only a stronger partnership, but also many positive benefits to the whole community.

## **POSITIVE BENEFITS**

- Yilingga Marna will create more efficiency and more certainty for both organisations.
- Instead of holding a separate negotiation for each individual land-use proposal, we've negotiated one single agreement for all council-led projects over the next 12 months.
- So it makes life easier, more certain and more efficient for everyone. There's certainty that rights will be delivered; and that projects can move ahead as planned.
- Also, as part of the agreement, Dja Dja Wurrung language names will be applied to projects as a matter of course.
- Information signage will be used in Council-led projects to explain the cultural and historic significance of locations.
- Culturally-important native species will be incorporated into public spaces and gardens.
- The City will engage the DJAARA group on commercial contracts where appropriate and fund ongoing annual works to remediate the Bendigo Creek.
- We will bring our Traditional knowledge and contemporary land management experience and understanding to restore a section of the creek.
- That's a really significant contribution for Dja Dja Wurrung in healing Country, healing People, healing water and healing climate.
- And it benefits the whole community in what we do constructively together.
- As they already do Council will continue to support DJAARA initiatives to improve job opportunities for DJAARA members and children.

- DJAARA will be given the right to comment on cultural heritage assessments commissioned by the City
- This means that Dja Dja Wurrung People can protect spaces and objects of spiritual and cultural significance prior to projects proceeding.
- This brings certainty around timeframes for the delivery of these projects; and they will be completed in a manner that protects our Cultural Heritage.
- When governments engage in genuine partnership with TOs, the benefits flow both ways – and to the whole community.
- This is a milestone agreement in peace making.
- It's a model that may be used in future agreements with other jurisdictions.
- We congratulate the City on its leadership and commitment to working together to develop this unique agreement and honoured to work with such a progressive community.
- We're pleased to walk in partnership with the City and look forward to a continuing and productive relationship. *Dhelkup Murrupuk* (Give good spirit).