



**Wednesday 31 May 2023**

## **Dja Dja Wurrung re-establish Cultural burning to care for Country**

DJAARA, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation is re-establishing the practice of Djandak Wi (Country Fire) on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, after receiving funding through the Victorian Government's Cultural Fire Grants program.

Dja Dja Wurrung Group Chief Executive Officer Rodney Carter said Cultural fire is a key Cultural practice that Dja Dja Wurrung use to care for Country.

"This funding through the Cultural Fire Grants program is truly momentous for DJAARA. It is enabling us to significantly build our capacity to heal Country with fire," Mr Carter said.

"Our project – Djandak Wi: Returning Cultural Fire to Country – is taking Dja Dja Wurrung Cultural fire leadership to the next level and, in the process, supporting Traditional Owner self-determination in fire across the state.

"There are direct benefits to Dja Dja Wurrung People, including increased employment in fire positions. We are creating training and development pathways for Djandak Wi practitioners, including specifically for women.

"DJAARA has been working with the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action (DEECA) to incorporate cultural burning into the State's planned burns regime for the last five years.

"This funding will further strengthen our partnerships with DEECA and other land managers, and enable Dja Dja Wurrung People to have increased decision making and independence in fire delivery.

"The legacy of this project will include a comprehensive plan for Cultural fire practice into the future. We must ensure Dja Dja Wurrung can continue to deliver fire in years to come, and better respond to fire risk and climate change impacts on Country," Mr Carter said.

Djandak Wi involves seasonal burning and careful stewardship over a long period of time. Following the principle of "Right Fire, Right Time", small patch burning methods or "cool burns" are carried out at specific places and times of the year.

Djandak Wi Practitioners use clues in the landscape to understand where and how to apply fire. Following burns, practitioners have observed healing changes to Country such as reduction of weeds and re-emergence of native species.

The project includes a series of pilot burns, with partners, to demonstrate how Cultural fire can be used to improve different landscapes.

The Cultural Fire Grants program is a Victorian Government initiative that supports Traditional Owners to lead the practice of cultural burning and their unique pathway for creating healthy Country and communities.

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