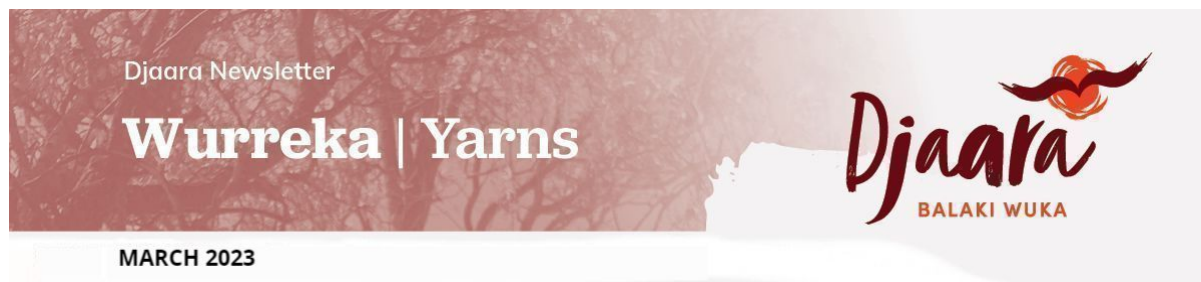


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SHIFTING THE CULTURE

Dja Dja Wurrung Culture showcased at Court opening



Dja Dja Wurrung smoking ceremony prior to the official opening, at Racquel Kerr's Bunjil artwork.

The opening of the new Bendigo Law Courts on Friday 24 February was a momentous occasion for DJAARA, and an emotional experience for many.

The embedding of Dja Dja Wurrung art and Culture into the very fabric of the building, and a Dja Dja Wurrung smoking ceremony before the official opening powerfully illustrated a shift away from the old colonial system to one that is more Culturally safe and inclusive.

DJAARA Board Chair Trent Nelson said it was inspiring and humbling to see Djaara art and culture embedded into Bendigo's physical infrastructure.

creates a culturally safe space for our People, knowing that we've done this," Mr Nelson said.



Left: Guests at the smoking ceremony outside the building (left). Right: Dja Dja Wurrung smoke the Koori courtroom; Dja Dja Wurrung artworks by Troy Firebrace (background) and Jason Kerr (foreground, on table).

Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Rodney Carter paid credit to the Dja Dja Wurrung artists. "They have absolutely excelled in wanting to honour the ancestors and celebrate Culture and life.

"What you see within this building, with Bunjil looking over us, protecting us is a spirit, a murrup, that's been put into this building.

"That charges all of us within the judiciary, to do something unique and different in Victoria's history that's never been done before," Mr Carter said.

Opening the new Law Courts, Premier of Victoria Daniel Andrews said, "This is a stunning architectural outcome and one that is deeply connected to Country and one that is deeply respectful of the fact that we are here today amongst the oldest continuous culture known to human history."



Left: DJAARA Board Chair Trent Nelson with Premier Daniel Andrews. Right: Dja Dja Wurrung artist Racquel Kerr gave the Welcome to Country.

DJAARA Member and magistrate Abigail Burchill said courts traditionally have not been a safe or good place for the Aboriginal community.

“There’s always some wariness when it involves courts and I even say that as a magistrate,” Ms Burchill said.

“For the experience of this court to be as Cultural as what is has been really uplifting for me. Right from the start, in traditional practice being followed in the smoking and Dja Dja Wurrung People being the first to enter the court officially. And to cleanse it and smoke it,” Ms Burchill said.

Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises General Manager - Economic Development Steve Jackson acknowledged the contributions of many Dja Dja Wurrung Members and staff throughout the process.

“Many elements, including the smoking ceremony and water ponds interpreted in the landscaping, are hard to capture in photos but create the layered journey community will experience when visiting the courts,” Mr Jackson said.

Kangaroo grass - we're leading the way



Growing **buwatj** (kangaroo grass) as a seed crop on Djandak is another step closer with the publication of a literature review by PhD student Dylan Male, as part of DJANDAK's Djandak Dja Kunitja project.

Djandak Dja Kunitja, which means 'Country healing its home', aims to return kangaroo grass to the landscape, where it was widespread before European invasion. Kangaroo grass seeds are ground for flour. The four-year project aims to develop methods to grow large-scale kangaroo grass crops on Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

One step has been to appoint a PhD student to the project to improve understanding and support the development of the species as a seed crop.



Buwatj seeding trials.

Dylan has reviewed the published literature around kangaroo grass to inform the production of the species as a crop and determine areas for future research.

“What’s been published is mostly about using kangaroo grass for rehabilitation and restoration,” Dylan said.

“But the knowledge has been really useful to inform its use as a crop.”

The literature review investigates genetic, environmental and management factors that influence plant growth, development, and seed yield. It also outlines possibilities and challenges of using Kangaroo Grass as a seed crop.

“It’s good to support DJAARA’s vision to return a really culturally significant species to Djandak and develop it as a crop – which could bring economic benefits as well as healing Country,” Dylan said.

“This is an emerging research area. There are a few organisations around Australia starting to look at Indigenous grasses for food, but DJAARA is leading the way with Kangaroo Grass.”

[Read literature review](#)

International Women's Day

and about their hopes for the future.



International Women's Day is all about honouring the past, present and future Matriarchs, and their deep and spiritual connection to Country.

I am inspired by the strong and resilient women who have come before us and that walk with us, and acknowledge their ongoing contributions to culture, Country, and social justice.

International Women's Day is a day of visibility for women, for reflecting on our common experiences and celebrating our achievements, for solidarity.

And, hopefully, a day on which we plan for making the world a better place for the next generations of women and girls.



International Women's Day is a day to reflect on the opportunities I have as a woman, the experiences I have had and how I contribute to the opportunities women have now and in the future.

As a mother of three boys, I want them to treat women with respect and as equals.



It is important for me to honour the stories of the many strong Djaara women who have come before me, and to carry their resilience and commitment to fighting for our rights into my work and studies today.



We're a finalist in the Banksia Sustainability Awards!

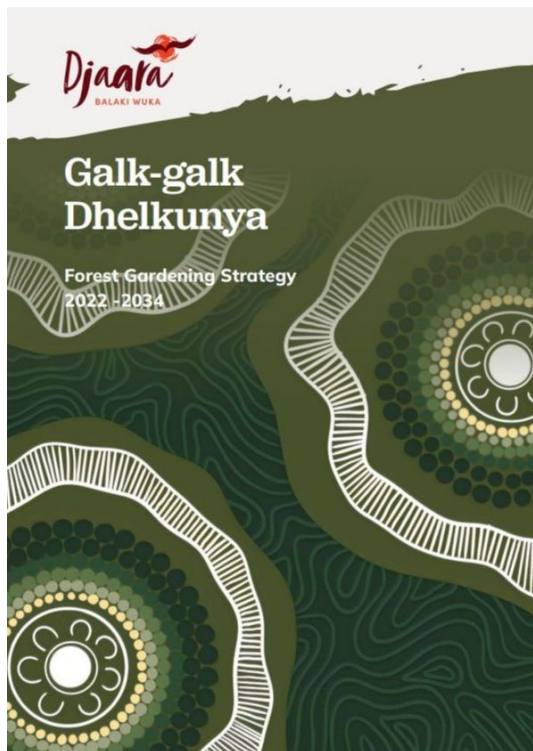
DJAARA is a finalist in the 34th annual Banksia Sustainability Awards for the Corporation's Forest Gardening Strategy, [Galk-galk Dhehkunya](#) (to care for/to heal, many trees), which was [launched in December last year](#).

Acting Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Cassandra Lewis was thrilled the Corporation's innovative strategy had been recognised by the Banksia Awards, which are regarded as

Galk galk Dhelkunya is Djaara's contemporary philosophy and practice for managing Cultural landscapes on Djandak (Dja Dja Wurrung Country)," Ms Lewis said.

"The Banksia Awards celebrate sustainability and ingenuity – both of which our Forest Gardening strategy exemplifies.

"The strategy – and Forest Gardening as a concept – seek to bridge worldviews and present a holistic approach to managing Country within a contemporary context.



"We are grateful to the Banksia Foundation for promoting innovative sustainable practices and helping to connect people with common goals," Ms Lewis said.

The Banksia Awards recognise Australian individuals, communities, businesses and governments for their innovation and excellence in environmental and social stewardship.

DJAARA is one of three finalists in the [First Nations Leading a Sustainable Future Award](#).

[Learn more](#)

SHARING DJA DJA WURRUNG LANGUAGE

Our language connects us to water, land, animals, and People.

It calls us to ceremony and strengthens our identity.

spoken; we share it in song and ensure it is placed lovingly back to Djandak, where it belongs, by us. Those that live and visit here in Central Victoria more and more want to support Dja Dja Wurrung reclamation of our rights and support our continued presence here. We hope that those who travel across, visit and reside on Djandak recognise our unique language and distinct culture.

Buwatj | Kangaroo Grass

Djaara | People, Dja Dja Wurrung People

Djakitj | Food, dining room

Djandak | Country, Dja Dja Wurrung Country

Djandak Dja Kuditja | Country healing its home

Galk-galk Dhelkunya | To care for/to heal, many trees

Let us know what you think!

Do you like this newsletter?

What would you like to see more of?

We'd love to hear your feedback.

Get in touch



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Office Hours:

Monday - Friday

9:00am - 5:00pm

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