

Media Release

Tuesday 14 November

Babies welcomed to Country in Dja Dja Wurrung ceremony

DJAARA hosted a Welcome Baby to Country ceremony, in partnership with Bendigo Health, for all babies born on Dja Dja Wurrung Country, at the Garden for the Future on Tuesday 14 November.

DJAARA General Manager Cassandra Lewis described the ceremony as a contemporary version of a traditional Dja Dja Wurrung Cultural practice.

“This Welcome ceremony for babies honours and acknowledges a child’s connection to the lands on which they are born,” Ms Lewis said.

“For our People, the smoking ceremony and traditional Welcome offers wellbeing and protection and connects Baby to Country.

“It acknowledges a child’s relationship with Country, and also their responsibility to care for Country.

“This ceremony is about bringing community together and beginning the journey of education and reconciliation.

“Practising our traditional Culture on Country is also healing for Dja Dja Wurrung People, who are still impacted by colonisation. It is important for us to pass our Culture onto the next generation.

“We are pleased to work in partnership with Bendigo Health to also share our Culture with the wider community,” Ms Lewis said.

The Welcome Baby to Country ceremony is part of a week of events celebrating 10 years since the signing of DJAARA’s Recognition and Settlement Agreement with the State of Victoria.

Bendigo Health Board Chair Dr Ewa Piejko said it is a privilege for Bendigo Health to host this thriving event with DJAARA.

“Welcome Baby to Country is an important cultural ceremony that acknowledges the importance of a child’s sense of identity and belonging through connection to the traditional lands on which they’re born,” she said.

One hundred families registered to participate in the Welcome ceremony, which was for Dja Dja Wurrung and non-Indigenous babies aged up to 36 months.

Families were invited to participate in the smoking ceremony. Babies were then individually welcomed to Country by Dja Dja Wurrung Elders and presented with a certificate and cultural gifts.

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