

Monday 27 November

CELEBRATIONS HIGHLIGHT AN EXTRAORDINARY DECADE OF PROGRESS

DJAARA, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, has highlighted an extraordinary decade of progress towards self-determination in its week-long YAPENYA, celebrating 10 years since the Corporation signed a Recognition and Settlement Agreement (RSA) with the State of Victoria, this month.

Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Rodney Carter explained that YAPENYA means ‘to dance, to sing, to gather, to celebrate’.

“It was a heartfelt and joyful week of gathering, reflecting, and most definitely celebrating,” Mr Carter said.

“Through the first comprehensive agreement of Country, Dja Dja Wurrung People have shown what is possible. We have a voice, and the whole community in Central Victoria is stronger for it.

“We are increasingly at the table with government and leading work across Dja Dja Wurrung Country through our philosophy of **ngaldurrong yana** (walking together).

“We have grown from a small organisation to one employing more than 200 people across the Corporation and our three enterprises.

“We are rehabilitating our upside-down Country, sharing our art and Culture, growing native foods and more.

“Our People have more opportunities to heal Country, practise Culture, develop careers, build businesses, and participate in community.

“We are creating positive outcomes for our community, in our local community. And there are many flow-on benefits for the region.”

Speaking about the week of celebrations, Mr Carter said, “We were thrilled to share our first ever Gala Dinner with many who have been with us over the past decade – and in the preceding 15 years of advocacy – including Dja Dja Wurrung Elders, Corporation Members, staff, partners and our many friends and allies.”

Award winning journalist and Dja Dja Wurrung, Yorta Yorta woman Bridget Brennan MCed the event, which was attended by many special guests, including Premier of Victoria Jacinta Allan, Parliamentary Secretary for First Peoples Christine Couzens, Member for Macedon Mary-Anne Thomas, Member for Bendigo West Maree Edwards, Federal Member for Bendigo Lisa Chesters, Solicitor Dr Matthew Storey, State Land Justice Executive Director Dean Cowie, Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations CEO Paul Paton, and Bendigo District Aboriginal Co-operative CEO Dallas Widdicombe.

Monday saw the [official launch of Djaara Water Strategy Dhelkunyangu Gatjin](#) (‘working together to heal water’). The event also celebrated Kapa Gatjin, the Dja Dja

Wurrung water knowledge group, the partnership with all water agencies on **Djandak** (Dja Dja Wurrung Country), and progress towards the Djaara vision for water management.

On Tuesday was DJAARA's largest ever [Welcome Baby to Country ceremony](#), where almost 70 Indigenous and non-Indigenous babies and their parents participated in ceremony and were welcomed, despite drizzly conditions.

Members of the public had the opportunity to enjoy a stunning collection of Dja Dja Wurrung artworks at DJAARA's YAPENYA Art Exhibition at Bendigo's Dudley House from Tuesday to Friday, and to browse or buy First Nations wares at the YAPENYA Twilight Market on Thursday.

A drop-in marquee near the 'Djaara-fied' BENDIGO sign in Rosalind Park, was a chance for community members to yarn with DJAARA staff about the work of the Corporation and its enterprises.

Reflecting on the week, and the decade, Mr Carter emphasised DJAARA's resolve to continue the important work towards Dja Dja Wurrung self-determination.

"We're going to continue to make sure Dja Dja Wurrung People are visible on Dja Dja Wurrung Country and empowered to manage our own affairs.

"We look forward to celebrating another decade of progress in 2033!" Mr Carter said.

If you missed the celebrations, it's not too late to participate in DJAARA's ongoing [cultural tours](#) and to enjoy the free [Djaara Lights exhibition](#). Meanwhile, follow DJAARA on socials to hear about future events.

For more information, please contact:

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