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DJA DJA WURRUNG FIRE STRATEGY A TOOL FOR CHANGE

DJAARA, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation has confirmed its role as a leader in fire management with the launch today of its 10-year **Djandak Wi** (Country Fire) Strategy, **dhelkunya wi**, which means ‘healing fire’ in Dja Dja Wurrung language.

Dja Dja Wurrung Elders and senior Forest Fire Management Victoria (FFMVic) staff were among more than 100 guests at the launch, which took place adjacent to a Dja Dja Wurrung cultural burn at Tang Tang Swamp near Dingee.

Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Rodney Carter described **dhelkunya wi** as a tool to change the way fire is used in the landscape.

“**Djandak Wi** is about using the right fire in the right place at the right time,” Mr Carter said.

“Dja Dja Wurrung People have been using fire to actively shape and manage the landscape for tens of thousands of years. Country has evolved over millennia to depend on **Djandak Wi**.

“But for several generations, this cultural practice was interrupted as Dja Dja Wurrung People were unable to access and carry out cultural practices on many parts of **Djandak** (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) because of colonisation.

“The interruption of Djandak Wi has profoundly changed fire patterns, which has contributed to large, intense fires, and the decline of species. It has had a detrimental effect – not just on Country, but also on us as a People.

“For us, **Djandak Wi** is important on many different levels: it’s a spiritual practice, it’s a social practice, we use it for ceremony – and it’s important in caring for Country, which in turn cares for us.

“**Djandak Wi** is a critical part of the conversation about fire management and landscape management in Victoria. DJAARA’s new strategy is bringing that conversation into the mainstream,” Mr Carter said.

DJAARA and its enterprise DJANDAK have been re-introducing **Djandak Wi** to **Djandak** since 2017, supported by FFMVic.

The strategy launch comes as DJAARA and its enterprise DJANDAK wrap up the largest and most successful cultural burning season since the practice was re-introduced.

Funding from the Victorian Government’s Cultural Fire Grants program in 2022 has enabled DJAARA to build capacity and expand the Djandak Wi program and, importantly, develop the **Djandak Wi** Strategy.

“I’m very proud of the scale of our achievement over recent years. We have been able to make a significant impact with minimal resources,” Mr Carter said.

“Through our philosophy of **ngaldurrong yana** (walking together) DJAARA is influencing fire management in Victoria.

“Dja Dja Wurrung philosophy is about caring for Country in a holistic way. **Djandak Wi** is an important tool, but we don’t use it in isolation: it’s part of a holistic suite of tools to heal Country, heal Dja Dja Wurrung People, and heal communities that share Djandak with us.

“Sharing of Dja Dja Wurrung knowledge enables fire managers to understand a different way of looking at landscapes, and to adopt methods that minimise harm to Country while also reducing the risk of wildfire.

“We need to have conversations about effective ways to achieve right fire – which may include conversations about resourcing and the regulatory environment, as the effects of colonisation continue to create significant challenges in Dja Dja Wurrung People being able to practise **Djandak Wi**.

“We encourage fire managers to engage with our strategy in a spirit of curiosity. We hope the strategy will prompt reflection and robust discussions about what is the right fire for healthy Country and for the people that live there,” Mr Carter said.

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