



Bush Heritage
Australia



MEDIA RELEASE

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DJA DJA WURRUNG & CONSERVATIONISTS CELEBRATE PLAN TO HEAL COUNTRY

DJAARA, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, and national conservation not-for-profit Bush Heritage Australia yesterday launched a shared plan to guide landscape management across nearly 3,000 hectares of Bush Heritage-managed reserves in north-west Victoria.

The two organisations, who have worked together for 17 years, celebrated their **Wurreka Galkangu** partnership and the **Wurreka Galkangu** shared strategic landscape plan in a ceremony on **Djandak** (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) at Bush Heritage-managed Bellair Reserve, east of Bendigo.

Wurreka Galkangu means 'to yarn, to talk' and 'to build together, make things happen together, more connected to Country' in Dja Dja Wurrung language.

The **Wurreka Galkangu** partnership is a deep commitment to right-way land management that creates space for culturally led land management practices and Western science to meet.

It ensures **Djaara** (Dja Dja Wurrung People) voices are central in decision making about caring for **Djandak** and, more broadly, it recognises Traditional Custodian Knowledge's vital role in delivering the strongest outcomes for Country.

Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO hailed Wurreka Galkangu as an inspiring way forward to heal People and Country.

"Djaara have deep knowledge of Country handed down through our **Martinga Guli** - our Ancestors. We know how to listen to Country and understand what it needs. Wurreka Galkangu provides a framework for **Djaara** to share our knowledge and walk together in caring for Country," Mr Carter said.

Both partners committed to a deep co-design process to produce the plan, including numerous workshops with Djaara on Country and the dedicated efforts of a regular project group. This approach offers a valuable pathway for other organisations and land managers to follow.

Bush Heritage Australia CEO Rachel Lowry said the partnership with DJAARA continues to widen Bush Heritage's approach to conservation, to find innovative ways of thinking about, engaging with and caring for Country.

"Being able to share knowledge and care for Country with DJAARA is a privilege that results in deeper relationships and stronger outcomes for conservation and culture across this incredible landscape," Ms Lowry said.

Looking ahead, the plan will operationalise the partners' shared vision by carrying out **dhelkunya dja gunga** (healing strategies) for Dja Dja Wurrung People and Country. Healing strategies include: supporting **Djaara** to

work on Country, returning cultural burning to the landscape, reconnecting and improving the ecological function of the landscape, and continuing to strengthen and share biocultural knowledge.

Bush Heritage and DJAARA will continue to monitor the development of the partnership through social, cultural and ecological indicators to ensure the process of healing Country leads to healthy Country.

ABOUT:

DJAARA

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, trading as DJAARA, is a representative body for Dja Dja Wurrung People.

Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung People) have lived on our traditional lands and cared for **Djandak** (Dja Dja Wurrung Country) over many thousands of years. For us, **Djandak** is more than just a landscape, it is more than what is visible to the eye; it is a living entity which holds the stories of creation and histories that cannot be erased.

Dja Dja Wurrung land extends from Mount Franklin and the towns of Creswick and Daylesford in the southeast to Castlemaine, Maldon and Bendigo in the east, Boort in the north, Donald in the northwest, to Navarre Hill and Mount Avoca marking the southwest boundary. Our territory encompasses the Bendigo and Clunes goldfields and the Loddon and Avoca River watersheds. Hundreds of years ago, our Country was mostly covered in open forests and woodlands, providing us with the plants and animals that we used for food, medicine, shelter and customary practices.

Since colonisation, much of **Djandak** has been modified with large areas of vegetation cleared for agriculture and disturbed by the gold mining activities of the mid-nineteenth century. Dja Dja Wurrung People were removed and excluded from participation in decision making about Djandak. This has left a sick and highly fragmented landscape. Today, though our Country is vastly changed, it still holds many important values.

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Bush Heritage Australia:

Bush Heritage is a leading not-for-profit conservation organisation protecting ecosystems and wildlife across the Australian continent that is grounded in science and culture. Bush Heritage works to protect and heal Country, now and for future generations.

In 1991, through its founder environmentalist Bob Brown, Bush Heritage began acquiring land to manage for conservation. As the organisation expanded, it recognised partnerships as critical to achieve the greatest impact.

In 2008, their first Aboriginal partnership began with the Wunambal Gaambera People in the Kimberley of northwest Western Australia. This partnership set a new benchmark for land management that centred Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People within all aspects of the decision-making process.

This was the beginning of Bush Heritage's right-way approach through respectful business and engagement with Aboriginal partners.

Today, Bush Heritage works with Traditional Custodians across the continent. Partnerships include landscapes where Traditional Custodians have had their lands returned to them under Australian law, and others where lands are yet to be returned.

<https://bushheritage.org.au/>

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