

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday May 19, 2025



CITY OF GREATER
BENDIGO



STRATHFIELDSAYE TOWN SQUARE, DJAYI BALAK GARAT, OFFICIALLY OPENED

A smoking ceremony and community planting of native species have today marked the official opening of the \$1.5M Strathfieldsaye Town Square.

The Strathfieldsaye Town Square has been named Djayi balak garat, which means 'tread lightly you lot on Country' in Dja Dja Wurrung language.

The project is the first to be completed from start to finish under the Yilingga Marna ('shake hands' in Dja Dja Wurrung language) agreement between the City of Greater Bendigo and DJAARA (the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation).

Yilingga Marna recognises each organisation's priorities and Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples' rights as the Traditional Owners of this land. It provides an agreed pathway for the City to deliver projects on Country that are also on Crown land.

Under the agreement, Dja Dja Wurrung enterprise DJANDAK created timber furniture with custom artwork by Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta artist Drew Berick, interpretive signage, and completed contemporary tree scarring and understory planting.

Successfully working with DJANDAK on a paving design, the City completed the paving works on site. The paving in the central space symbolises all people in the community meeting together.

The project also extended to the delivery of a mural on the recently constructed Emu Creek underpass by Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta artist Troy Firebrace.

The town square also included the construction of flexible, paved gathering spaces, a north-south shared path connecting Apsley Street and Wellington Street/Strathfieldsaye Road, a hardscape commercial break out area, raised garden beds with seating, native planting and shade trees and open lawn space.

Mayor Cr Andrea Metcalf said Djayi balak garat forms the future heart of Strathfieldsaye.

"The creation of a town square was a key outcome of the 2017 Strathfieldsaye Urban Development Framework, where the community told us they wanted a gathering place for local events," Cr Metcalf said.

"This landmark destination provides a place for residents to shop, gather, meet, attend events and enjoy.

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“We would like to thank our DJAARA friends and colleagues for walking together with us to deliver this project. Strong, genuine engagement with Traditional Owners has achieved an amazing outcome, revitalising Country and providing our community with a renewed space.

“We are excited to see the community make use of the space and put it at the heart of local celebrations, events and other activities, while remembering to tread lightly and care for Country as we go.”

DJAARA General Manager Cassandra Lewis said it was fitting for the first project under Yilingga Marna to be about community gathering together.

“Community gathering for ceremony and trade is an important aspect of Djaara culture – and, indeed, of many cultures. The town square is a place where people from all cultures can gather and share Country together,” Ms Lewis said.

“Creative elements in the town square remind us of the continued presence of Dja Dja Wurrung People, but there’s a strong emphasis on this being a shared space where all people can meet equally.

“Dja Dja Wurrung People are proud to share our culture and our language with the broader community. We hope the community will come away with a deeper understanding of contemporary Dja Dja Wurrung culture, and to connect over shared values like caring for Country.”

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