



MEDIA RELEASE

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DJAARA and North Central Catchment Management Authority share a new approach for the Upper Avoca

DJAARA, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, and North Central Catchment Management Authority (CMA) are inviting landholders and communities across the Upper Avoca catchment to be part of a new, shared approach to caring for the Upper Avoca.

Dhelkunyangu Upper Avoca, meaning ‘Everyone working together to heal the Upper Avoca’ in Dja Dja Wurrung language, is a new healthy catchment plan developed by DJAARA and the North Central CMA, which represents a new way of managing catchments.

Dja Dja Wurrung Group Interim CEO Cassandra Lewis welcomed the new plan – the first of its kind – which centres Djaara (Dja Dja Wurrung) values and knowledge in the care and management of the waterway and surrounding landscape.

“We are proud that this healthy catchment plan is, for the first time, built around Dja Dja Wurrung values,” Ms Lewis said.

“We care for Country in a holistic way, with a long-term view — ensuring land and water are healthy and sustaining for future generations.

“Through this plan, we’re strengthening connectivity across the landscape so plants and animals can thrive, while building resilience across the Upper Avoca catchment.

“An important aspect of this plan is ngaldurrong yana (working together) – with our partners in government and community organisations, and with landholders and community members.

“We know the river and the Upper Avoca catchment is important to – and loved by – many. Through this plan, we hope to engage with and foster a sense of shared stewardship among those connected to the Upper Avoca,” Ms Lewis said.

North Central CMA Chief Executive Officer Brad Drust said protecting the Upper Avoca catchment is important to everyone and working together is the best way to achieve it.

“This project represents a true partnership, a shared commitment to caring for Country, and mutual respect,” he said.

“The Avoca River is one of the most significant waterways in our region and the area is home to important and evolving farming and viticulture communities.

“That means a changing system, and one that is also having to deal with reduced flows on the back of climate change.

“Significant conservation efforts have been made over the past 25 years on private and public land, to protect the region’s threatened eco systems. But more needs to be done.

“By protecting riverbanks and high-priority drought refuges, the project will help a raft of threatened species that depend on the health of the Avoca River and its catchment for survival.

“Creating biolinks will also help protect other fauna and flora the community loves,” Mr Drust said.

For Djaara, being in the driver’s seat alongside North Central CMA is a significant step, Ms Lewis said.

“For too long, Djaara People have been excluded from water management, despite our deep cultural responsibility to care for water and Country.

“This partnership enables us to bring Djaara knowledge and values back into the care of the Upper Avoca, and we look forward to working with the community through a shared approach to stewardship,” Ms Lewis said.

Copies of Dhelkunyangu Upper Avoca are available at the Avoca Visitor Centre, and can be downloaded from DJAARA djadjawurrung.com.au/resources (strategies) or North Central CMA at www.nccma.vic.gov.au/Dhelkunyangu. Representatives from DJAARA and North Central CMA will also have copies available at the Avoca market in coming months. Alternatively, community members can contact gatjin@djadjawurrung.com.au to request DJAARA to post a copy.

A community gathering day is planned for spring, which will be an opportunity for community members to meet and talk with project representatives from DJAARA and North Central CMA.

DJAARA and North Central CMA have done preliminary survey work, including Aboriginal Waterway Assessments and fish surveys, which will inform actions to improve landscape connectivity.

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