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Dja Dja Wurrung stories come to life in Castlemaine

Frederick Street is entering a new chapter, as Dja Dja Wurrung enterprise DJANDAK partners with Mount Alexander Shire Council to bring Dja Dja Wurrung storytelling and public art to the Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane Redevelopment Project.

DJANDAK's work will take shape through co-designed garden beds, sculpture, lighting, signposts and embedded artworks - turning an everyday walk through the precinct into an invitation for locals and visitors alike to connect with Country.

The precinct sits at the heart of community life in Castlemaine, connecting the Town Hall, Castlemaine Library, Phee Broadway Theatre and Senior Citizens Centre.

While Castlemaine's rich gold rush history is written into its buildings at every turn, this project adds a layer that has always belonged here but has been less visible: the stories of Dja Dja Wurrung Country and Culture.

Dja Dja Wurrung Group CEO Cassandra Lewis said the project offers a chance to honour storytelling in a place the whole community already gathers.

"We acknowledge that the many people who now call Castlemaine home have many different histories, and we all have a connection to this place.

"This precinct has been a gathering place for community for a long time, and the redevelopment will make it an engaging and enriching place for community to continue to gather here into the future.

"The works by Dja Dja Wurrung artists will offer a reminder that Country exists even beneath the pavement we walk on.

"We're proud to share our stories and Culture with the wider community, and hope that this streetscape will deepen the whole community's connection to Country, for generations to come," Ms Lewis said.

Mount Alexander Shire Mayor Toby Heydon said the collaboration with DJANDAK is a defining feature of the streetscape redevelopment project.

"The Frederick Street and Mechanics Lane streetscape redevelopment is a once-in-a-generation investment in the centre of Castlemaine. As we improve accessibility, safety, and the usability of this central public space, it's equally important that we create a precinct that reflects a wide range of stories and the living culture of this place.

"Through our partnership with DJANDAK, Dja Dja Wurrung storytelling will be woven into the streetscape, resulting in a vibrant and welcoming civic space where residents and visitors can experience the richness of Dja Dja Wurrung culture at the centre of community life," Cr Heydon said.

DJANDAK is delivering the Dja Dja Wurrung public art component of the project, guided by a group of Dja Dja Wurrung (Djaara) knowledge holders, known as a **wartaka** – which means 'come together with purpose' in Dja Dja Wurrung language.

The **wartaka** has worked with Council staff and designers to share cultural knowledge and guide its use in shaping themes and direction for the works.

Djaara artists will now begin to create artworks that provide a sensory, immersive experience – going beyond the visual alone.

Visitors can expect storytelling that's felt as well as seen, discovered through texture, light and sound as they move through the precinct.

The finished precinct will give Castlemaine a new landmark – somewhere visitors, school groups and history walks can connect with Djaara Country, while the wider community continues to gather for events, performances and everyday life in the heart of town.

Stay up to date via Council's project page: [Project updates | Mount Alexander Shire Council](#)

This project has been made possible through an Australian Government grant of \$12.19 million under the Regional Precincts and Partnerships Program.

The Dja Dja Wurrung component is being delivered by DJANDAK, an enterprise of DJAARA, the Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, in partnership with Mount Alexander Shire Council.

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