



**THE VICTORIAN  
ABORIGINAL  
HERITAGE COUNCIL**

10 YEAR ANNIVERSARY



# INTRODUCTION



Aboriginal peoples of Victoria have fought for generations for recognition of their unique relationship with and custodianship of their lands. This month, we celebrate the anniversaries of two key milestones in the fight for Aboriginal recognition and self determination.

Fifty years ago on 27 May, Australians voted overwhelmingly to amend the Constitution to include Aboriginal peoples in the census and to allow the Commonwealth to create laws for/about Aboriginal peoples.

Ten years ago on 28 May, the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* came into effect.

The Act created the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, the first statutory body in Victoria whose members must be Traditional Owners.

The Council's journey over these ten years has been challenging at times:

- the Council was one of the subjects of a Parliamentary Inquiry undertaken by the previous Victorian Government in 2013;
- the Act was reviewed between 2012 and 2016; and,
- there was a judicial review of one of Council's decisions in the Supreme Court.

Through these events, the Council's integrity and sound decision making were affirmed. The Parliamentary Inquiry produced a positive report on the Council's work. Amendments to the Act passed in 2016 gave the Council more responsibilities. And the judicial decision upheld the Council's decision, endorsed the Council's decision making processes, and ordered costs in favour of the Council.

The Council's work has also been significantly rewarding. Aboriginal cultural heritage is now managed by Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) in more than fifty per cent of the state. We have a dedicated unit working for the return and protection of our Ancestors' remains. And we are seeing greater recognition of Traditional Owners and their roles with respect to cultural heritage management.

These milestones could not have occurred without the commitment of so many people, those before us and those who walk alongside us today.

On behalf of the Council, I would particularly like to acknowledge the contribution of former Council members, previous Chairpersons, Council's Secretariat and key stakeholders who have supported us in realising our vision.

We remain determined to ensure Victoria's rich heritage is protected and that our Ancestors are returned to Country.

**Eleanor A Bourke**  
Chairperson

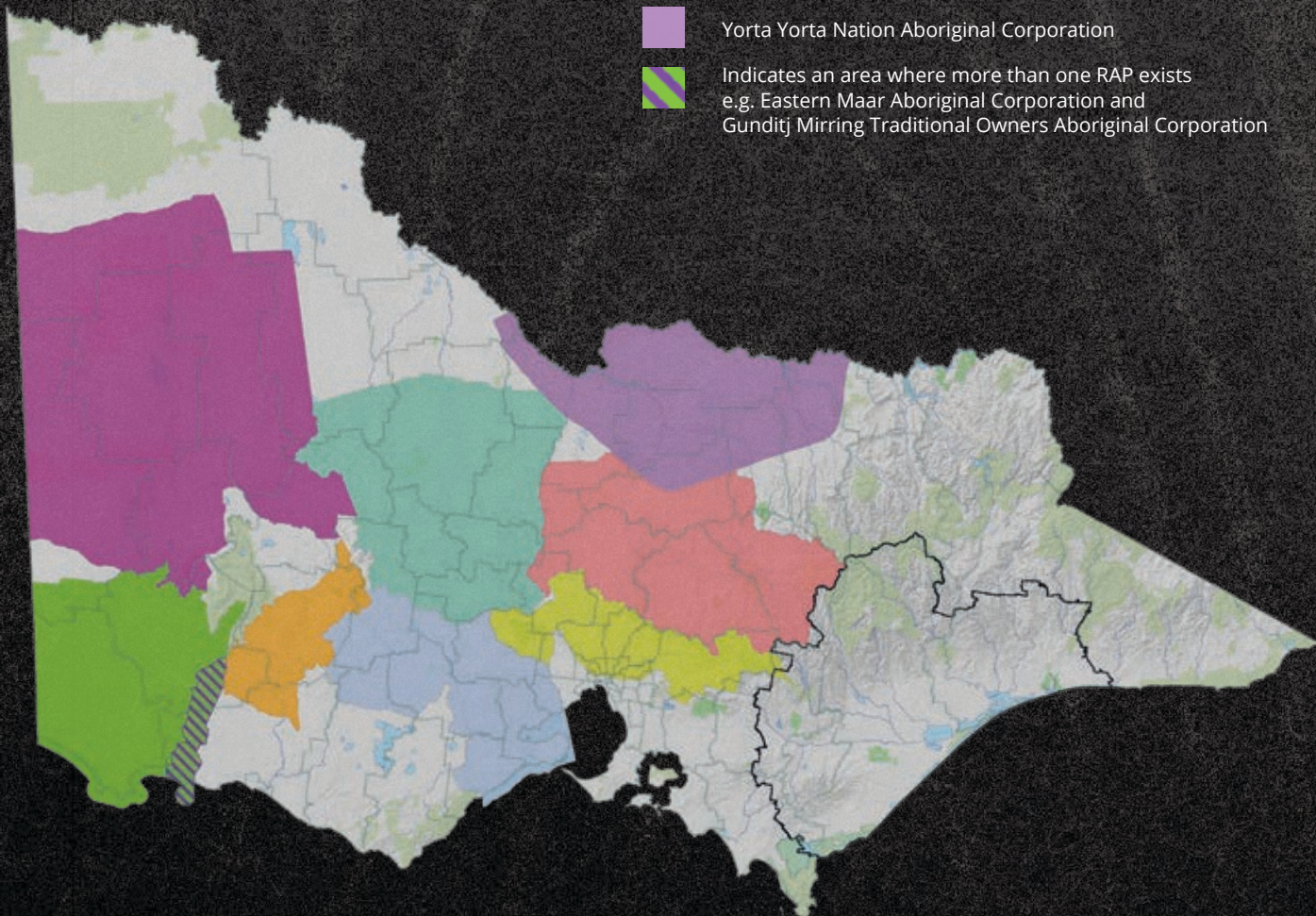
**Warning: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this document contains images or names of people who have passed away.**



# REGISTERED ABORIGINAL PARTIES

As at 23 May 2017

-  Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
-  Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
-  Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
-  Gunaikurnai not currently a RAP  
Area shown is the RSA under the  
*Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*
-  Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation
-  Martang Pty Ltd
-  Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
-  Wathaurung Aboriginal Corporation
-  Wurundjeri Tribe Land and  
Compensation Cultural Heritage Council Inc.
-  Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation
-  Indicates an area where more than one RAP exists  
e.g. Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and  
Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation





# THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HERITAGE COUNCIL



**18 OCTOBER**

Council meets for the first time

**2006**



**5 AUGUST**

Council launches its first Strategic Plan

**2008**

**4 FEBRUARY**

Council and the Heritage Council of Victoria launch the *Framework of Historical Themes* to promote understanding of Victoria's complex history

**9 SEPTEMBER**

Council helps develop and welcomes the *Traditional Owner Settlement Bill 2010* that advocates for a system that achieves land justice for Victorian Traditional Owners

**2010**

**2007**

**9 MARCH**

Council receives its first Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) application - by the end of that year Council had received 22 RAP applications

**28 MAY**

*Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* comes into effect and Council begins operating

**30 MAY**

Council appoints Victoria's first RAP – Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

**2009**

**14 OCTOBER**

Council helps develop and launch the Certificate IV in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management

**10 NOVEMBER**

Council invites all RAPs to participate in the very first RAP Forum to facilitate interaction and spread experiences and best practice



**2011**

**16 FEBRUARY**

Council welcomes the *Parliamentary Inquiry into the Establishment and Effectiveness of RAPs*

**26 MAY**

Council launches its second Strategic Plan





#### 17 MAY

Council co-hosts a youth forum with the KYC and the Trust, involving cultural mapping, weaving, storytelling and a tour on Country

#### 22 MARCH

*The Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Bill* passes in Parliament giving Council greater responsibilities for the protection and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage

#### 1 AUGUST

Council's new functions and powers, following amendments to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, come into effect

#### 28 SEPTEMBER

Justice Bell of the Supreme Court hands down his decision in the matter of *Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation -v- the Council*, upholding the Council's decision and describing its decision making as "scrupulous"

#### NOVEMBER

The *Parliamentary Inquiry into the Establishment and Effectiveness of RAPs* releases its findings, recommending better legislative recognition of the primacy of Traditional Owners

#### JULY

Council publishes its recommendations for change regarding the return of Ancestral Remains, *Bringing Our Ancestors Home: We will not be well until this is done*

#### 8 SEPTEMBER

Council publishes its third Strategic Plan



2014

2012

2016

2013

2015

2017

#### MARCH

Council releases *Bringing our Ancestors Home: Managing and returning Ancestral Remains in Victoria* for comment



#### 18 APRIL

In partnership with the Koorie Youth Council (KYC) and the National Trust of Australia (VIC) (Trust), Council co-hosts *Our history: More than rocks*, an event

for young people to come together to explore Victoria's cultural heritage

#### 14 MAY

In responding to the *Parliamentary Inquiry into the Establishment and Effectiveness of RAPs*, the Government acknowledges the primacy of Traditional Owners in cultural heritage protection and management

#### SEPTEMBER

Council establishes a Joint Steering Group (JSG), with the then Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and holds a series of five regional consultation meetings during 2014 and 2015

#### FEBRUARY

The JSG holds the last of five regional meetings across the state regarding the protection and return of Ancestors

#### 12 DECEMBER

Uncle Wally Cooper passes away after a brief illness

#### FEBRUARY

Council's Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson are invited to meet with the South Australian State Aboriginal Heritage Committee

#### APRIL

Council members are invited to meet with the Aboriginal Heritage Council of Tasmania over three days



These exchanges provide valuable learning experiences and opportunities to share how cultural heritage protection is legislated in other states and the role of state-wide bodies in its protection.



# VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HERITAGE COUNCIL MEMBERS



**ELEANOR A BOURKE**

CHAIRPERSON

Eleanor Bourke was born in Hamilton, Victoria and is a prominent member of the Wergaia people with a career in Aboriginal affairs spanning 40 years in Victoria, the ACT and South Australia. Eleanor has held various executive positions in the community and in State and Federal government sectors, including five years as the co-Chair of Reconciliation Victoria.

Eleanor has made a significant contribution to the Council during her four terms as a member, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. *Eleanor's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 12 August 2018.*



**TIM CHATFIELD**

DEPUTY CHAIRPERSON

Tim Chatfield of Halls Gap is a member of the Djab Wurrung community and has held numerous leadership positions in Aboriginal communities, serving as Chairperson of the Victorian Aboriginal Housing Board and previously as Chairperson and Regional Councilor for the Tumbukka Region of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission. Tim's cultural heritage expertise and experience has been sought on a wide range of local and statewide plans and initiatives. Tim has been a Council member since 2007 and has served as Deputy Chairperson for three of those years. *Tim's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 30 June 2019.*



**GERALDINE ATKINSON**

MEMBER

Geraldine Atkinson is a Bangerang/Wiradjuri woman who has devoted her career to expanding the possibilities available to Koorie people through education. For over 30 years, Geraldine has been a significant presence in the Koorie and wider Victorian community, beginning as a Teacher's Aide in 1976 to her current role as President of the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated (VAEAI) since 1999. Currently, Geraldine is the Victorian representative for the National Indigenous Education Consultative Body, Deputy Chair of the Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, and Chair of Lulla's Children and Family Centre in Shepparton. *Geraldine's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 6 November 2019.*





## JENNIFER BEER

### MEMBER

Jennifer Beer is a proud and strong Wudyubaluk woman from the Wimmera/ Mallee region and is a descendant of Yanggendinyanyuk (Dick-a-Dick). She has 30 years' experience in Koori Education and a Diploma in Vocational Education and Training. Jenny was part of negotiating the first successful Native Title Claim in Victoria. She has also done revival and reclamation of her language Wergaia, with the support of the Victorian School of Languages. Jenny is passionate about her culture and language and the rights of all to live and practice their culture. Jenny has been a member since 2011, including a term as Deputy Chairperson. *Jenny's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 6 July 2017.*



## JIM BERG

### MEMBER

Jim Berg is a Gunditjmara man. Jim was the founder of the Koorie Heritage Trust Inc and was involved in the establishment of the Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service. He was a leading figure in a legal battle that resulted in Aboriginal human remains held by the University of Melbourne and the Museum of Victoria being returned to Country and reburied. Jim is co-author of *The Power and the Passion: Our Ancestors Return Home* and has been a Justice of the Peace for 42 years. Jim was the inaugural Chair of the Council and served again as Chair during 2010. *Jim's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 30 June 2019.*



## RODNEY CARTER

### MEMBER

Rodney Carter is a descendant of Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta people and resides in Bendigo. He currently works for his people, the Dja Dja Wurrung, as Group CEO of Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and Dja Dja Wurrung Enterprises Pty Ltd. Rodney was involved in negotiating for, and being a signatory to, the Dja Dja Wurrung people's native title settlement under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*. Rodney has made a significant contribution to the Council during his four terms as a member, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. *Rodney's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 31 August 2018.*





## NELLIE FLAGG

### MEMBER

Nellie Flagg (nee Taylor / Charles) is a descendant of Wemba Wemba, Dja Wrung and Boonwurrung and lives on Wathaurung Country (Geelong). Nellie has worked for and with Aboriginal people for over 30 years in different roles within State and Commonwealth government agencies as well as community organisations, including the Department of Justice and Wathaurong Aboriginal Co-operative. Nellie is proud of who she is and where she has come from. *Nellie's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 7 August 2019.*



## JILL GALLAGHER AO

### MEMBER

Jill Gallagher is a Gunditjmara woman from Western Victoria who has worked within, led and advocated for the Victorian Aboriginal community all her life. Jill has been CEO of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCH) since 2001 and was instrumental in achieving bipartisan support for the 'Statement of Intent' to 'Close the Gap' in Aboriginal life expectancy.

Prior to working at VACCHO, Jill worked for the return of Indigenous skeletal remains and Indigenous cultural property. She has also sat on various committees, the Equal Opportunity Commission Victoria Indigenous Reference Group and the Premiers Aboriginal Advisory Committee. Jill was included in the Victorian Honour Roll of Women in 2010 and awarded an Order of Australia in 2013. *Jill's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 30 June 2019.*



## MICK HARDING

### MEMBER

Mick Harding is a Taungurung man, dedicated to protecting and reinvigorating culture within his community. Mick is involved in coordinating workshops to promote Aboriginal culture through his art and storytelling and has many years' experience in cultural heritage management. Mick was Chairperson of Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation and its first representative on the board of the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations. During his four terms, Mick has made a significant contribution to the Council as a member, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. *Mick's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 30 August 2018.*





## MARIE (SISSY) HAVEA

### MEMBER

Marie (Sissy) Havea resides in Robinvale and has traditional ties to the waters of the Murray, Lachlan and Murrumbidgee rivers and flood plains. For more than two decades, Sissy has worked for and with Aboriginal people in various areas including health, education and cultural heritage protection. Sissy is committed to leading and supporting community to achieve its aspirations and values creating real and respectful partnerships as part of this. Sissy is also very passionate about ensuring Old People are returned to Country and follows the legacy of her late father to protect Ancestors. *Sissy's three-year appointment as a Council member will end on 6 November 2019.*



## RON JONES

### MEMBER

Ron Jones is a Wurundjeri man with strong links to Coranderrk and Bullum Bullum in Burnside. Ron brings extensive knowledge of issues affecting Aboriginal Victorians as founder and Secretary of the Aboriginal Medical Service in Fitzroy, co-founder of the Adoption Centre for Aboriginal Children and his volunteer work at various Aboriginal organisations. Over the last 10 years, Ron has served on the Elders' Committee of Wurundjeri Tribe Land and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council. Ron is passionate about and committed to the preservation of Aboriginal cultural heritage and the teaching and sharing of history. *Ron's three-year term on the Council ends on 6 November 2019.*





## PREVIOUS MEMBERS



### GRAHAM ATKINSON

Graham Atkinson is a descendant of the Dja Dja Wurrung and Yorta Yorta people. Graham has significant leadership experience, holding positions including Chair of Native Title Services Victoria and Chair of the Dja Dja Wurrung Native Title Group. Graham was appointed to the State Government Steering Committee charged with developing a native title settlement framework for Victoria. Graham has been involved in many high profile heritage projects including the development of an Indigenous Land Use Agreement with the Minerals Council of Australia. Graham has a Master of Business Administration and degrees in arts and social work. Graham served as a Council member from May 2007 until May 2012.

### WAYNE ATKINSON

Wayne Atkinson served as a Council member from May until July in 2009.

### DAMEIN BELL

Damein Bell is from the Gunditjmara nation of Southwest Victoria. Damein has over 30 years' experience in Aboriginal affairs including education, training, native title, land justice and caring for country. Damein's previous roles include member of Parks Victoria Board and the Indigenous Advisory Committee for the Commonwealth's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999. Damein is currently CEO of Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation. Damein served as a Council member from May 2007 until May 2009.



### BONNIE CHEW

Bonnie Chew is a proud Wadawurrung woman with many years' experience in Aboriginal cultural heritage and education.

Bonnie was the Cultural Heritage Co-ordinator for Wadawurrung, where she worked on approximately 126 projects with various and diverse

stakeholders to achieve the best outcome in the preservation of cultural heritage on her traditional Country. Bonnie is also a regular lecturer promoting cultural heritage management.

Bonnie served as a Council member from October 2012 until January 2015.



### WALLY COOPER

Wally Cooper was a Yorta Yorta and Bangerang Elder and was a passionate cultural ambassador who shared his traditional knowledge with the wider community. He did this as a founding member and Board member of the Koorie Heritage Trust, before working there as a Cultural Officer and Curator. Wally also worked with the Catholic Education Office, the Victorian Farmers Federation, Victoria Police, and on Indigenous interpretive sign projects for both the Rural City of Wangaratta and Parks Victoria. In 2012, Wally was inducted to the Victorian Indigenous Honour Roll. Wally served as a Council member from September 2013 until his passing in December 2015.



## VICKI COUZENS

Vicki Couzens is a prominent member of the Kirrae Wurrong community. Vicki is a talented and accomplished artist who has played a leading role in promoting the culture of her people. She was also the Director of the possum cloak project for the Melbourne 2006 Commonwealth Games. Vicki has excellent leadership skills and has extensive experience serving on boards and committees including the Koorie Heritage Trust Inc and the Victorian Corporation for Aboriginal Languages. Vicki served as a Council member from May 2007 until July 2008.



## KAREN JACKSON

Karen Jackson is a Yorta Yorta woman with broad experience in Indigenous affairs ranging from State and Federal Government to community organisations. She is Director of the Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit at Victoria University and a previous member of the Victorian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission.

Karen served as Council member from Council's inception in May 2007 until May 2012.



## DENISE LOVETT

Denise Lovett is a Gunditjmara woman. Denise has a wealth of experience in protecting cultural heritage, including in her work as Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Officer for the South West and Wimmera Cultural Heritage Program, negotiating agreements on high profile projects including the Portland Wind Towers and the Glenelg Water Pipeline, and as former Executive Officer and Chair of Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation. Denise made a significant contribution to the Council as a member, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson. Denise served as a Council member from Council's inception in May 2007 until May 2013.

## RICKY MULLETT

Ricky Mullett is a qualified archaeologist and has been a passionate advocate for protecting and preserving Aboriginal heritage for over 30 years.

As well as playing an advisory role on Aboriginal heritage issues locally, regionally, state-wide and nationally, Ricky was involved in running education and managing programs about protection and preservation of significant Aboriginal sites in South Eastern Australia. Ricky contributed to the Council during his three terms, from 2007 until 2013, as a member, Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.



# COUNCIL ROLE

The Council plays an important role in the implementation of the Act. The Council's principal functions are outlined below.

## 1. MAKING DECISIONS ON REGISTERED ABORIGINAL PARTY (RAP) APPLICATIONS

Since its establishment in 2006, the Council has appointed ten RAPs. RAPs are organisations that hold decision-making responsibilities for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in a specified geographical area.

"Human rights are a key consideration for the Council when determining a RAP application. Victoria's *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006* (The Charter) recognises 20 key human rights -including cultural rights - and thinking about the Charter is not only a part of good decision-making for the Council, it's the law. The Charter requires the Council to act compatibly with human rights when going about its work, and to consider relevant human rights when making decisions, including decisions about whether or not to appoint a RAP. The Council has worked hard to develop internal mechanisms to ensure that human rights are respected in all aspects of RAP decision making." **TIM CHATFIELD**

## 2. MONITORING RAPs

Since 1 August 2016, the Council is responsible for overseeing and supervising the operations of RAPs. The Council is designing its approach to this work in collaboration with RAPs and with organisations already involved in monitoring RAPs.

"We need RAPs to be viable, strong and inclusive."

**JILL GALLAGHER**

## 3. PROTECTING ANCESTORS' RESTING PLACES AND RETURNING ANCESTORS TO COUNTRY

The Council is the central coordinating body responsible for Ancestral Remains in Victoria. This role, inherited on 1 August 2016, will allow the Council to strengthen the protection of Aboriginal burial places and deliver better support for Traditional Owners returning Ancestors to Country. To help implement the new legislation, the Council's Secretariat now includes an Ancestral Remains Unit made up of three full-time staff.

"The desecration of our Ancestors' remains impacts on us, it harms us. We all have a part to play so that true reconciliation can be achieved and our Ancestors returned back to their Country for reburial, where they find peace with our Spiritual Mother the land, before drifting off into the Dreamtime." **JIM BERG**

## 4. SECRET OR SACRED OBJECTS IN VICTORIA

From 1 August 2016, there are new obligations in relation to Aboriginal objects that are secret or sacred. A person who has custody of an Aboriginal object that is a secret or sacred object but who is not the owner of that object must, as soon as practicable, take all reasonable steps to transfer the object into the custody of the Council. The Council is developing some general guidance about secret or sacred objects and will work with Traditional Owners and the broader Victorian community to keep these objects safe and preserve them for future generations.

"Secret and sacred objects are a big part of who we are. They carry stories that shape us, and we, and future generations, in turn shape them.

They need to be with their rightful custodians so they can keep carrying our stories and our connections with them."

**JENNIFER BEER**



## 5. MANAGING THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND

The first Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Fund ever created in Victoria was established on 1 August 2016. The Council will be responsible for managing this Fund as guided by the Act. Over time, the Council is hoping to build up the Fund and to use it for initiatives which support the protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

“The protection of Victoria’s Aboriginal cultural heritage is of paramount importance to the Victorian community. But protection efforts need to be adequately resourced. Council and RAPs need to be resourced. To this end, we welcome the establishment of the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Fund and our role in managing it.”

**NELLIE FLAGG**

“Each year, approximately 600 Cultural Heritage Management Plans are undertaken to manage the protection of our cultural heritage. Stronger enforcement measures came into effect with the 2016 amendments to the Act. But our heritage is still being destroyed and it breaks my heart. Our heritage and waterways need better protection and looking after.”

**RON JONES**

## 6. MEASURES TO PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND AWARENESS

The Council’s work includes promoting understanding and awareness of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria. The Council achieves this through establishing partnerships and consulting with key stakeholders, making submissions to reviews of legislation, investigations and inquiries that impact on Aboriginal cultural heritage, and by participating in external committees and reference groups.

“The strongest protection of our cultural sites is achieved when others learn to care. We need more programs to create greater understanding for the public of just how beautiful and fragile some of our sites can be.”

**RODNEY CARTER**

“I am excited to be given a position on the Council and am looking forward to contributing to the cultural conversation for the protection of significant Aboriginal sites within the state. It is important that as members we work collectively to ensure all Aboriginal groups cultural rights are respected and recognised.”

**GERALDINE ATKINSON**

## 7. PROVIDING ADVICE TO THE MINISTER FOR ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS AND THE SECRETARY OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET

The Council provides advice to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs (Minister), both voluntarily and on request, on the protection and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria.

The Council also advises the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet on establishing standards and fee guidelines for consultation fees payable to RAPs by sponsors when preparing Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMPs) and assessments, and exercising his/her powers in relation to Cultural Heritage Permits, CHMPs and agreements.

“Everybody in this state needs to learn and understand Aboriginal cultural heritage. We will all be better for the experience.”

**MICK HARDING**

## 8. REPORTING TO THE MINISTER

From 1 August 2016, the Council must report to the Minister annually and produce a State of Victoria Aboriginal Cultural Heritage report every five years.

“Council welcomes working with RAPs and community to ensure that the Government is informed, through a range of reporting mechanisms, of the efforts to protect and manage Victoria’s cultural heritage.”

**ELEANOR BOURKE**

“The Council is made up of Victorian Traditional Owners, a real voice for our mobs, which keeps us all, as owners of cultural heritage within our own rights, on the same path - to protect and minimize harm to cultural heritage on our Countries. This Council has a unique role in today’s society with state legislation being administered by Aboriginal people. This in itself is a remarkable feat thanks to many people involved in cultural heritage for so long. Congratulations to all Victorian Aboriginal people in supporting the Act and this Council to continue to protect cultural heritage at a state level.”

**MARIE (SISSY) HAVEA**



# STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS



**ABORIGINAL  
HERITAGE COUNCIL  
OF TASMANIA**

"On behalf of the Aboriginal Heritage Council of Tasmania I congratulate the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council as you celebrate your 10th Anniversary.

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 marked a significant improvement in the management of Aboriginal heritage in Victoria and together with the recognition of Native Title holders, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) and 'Right People for Country' processes have enabled greater participation of Aboriginal people in the management of your land, including your heritage.

The Aboriginal Heritage Council in Tasmania has looked closely at the Victorian context when considering our own role in heritage management and the anticipated amendments to Tasmania's legislative and regulatory frameworks. We have benefitted

from the extensive conversations and information sharing regarding training in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management.

We have especially appreciated the developing relationship between our two Councils and the recent visit of three of your members to Tasmania. It was an invaluable experience discussing areas of common interests, progress made and some of the unfinished business still to be done. We look forward to this relationship continuing to grow.

On behalf of the Tasmanian Aboriginal Heritage Council I congratulate you and all who have shared in the work of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council over the last ten years and I wish you all the best to the coming years."

**ROCKY SAINTY**  
Chair

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**SENATOR  
PATRICK DODSON**

"As a proud Yawuru man from Broome in Western Australia, who had the opportunity to attend school in Victoria, I have always been mindful of the significant contribution that the Kooris of Victoria have made to the growth of cultural heritage recognition of Aboriginal Australia. Whether it is the fascinating stone works and cultural landscape of Budj Bim; the beautiful visitor's centre at Brambuk in the Grampians; or the proud history of communities such as Coranderrk, the heritage of Aboriginal people in Victoria has illuminated the national history of our country. Of course, the invention of the great game of footy, is also part of that story.

As we move towards the inevitable eventual recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our founding document, the Constitution, the recognition of the significance of our cultural heritage has been also rising. Now, it is clear that the mainstream Australian population is ready to learn more about our Indigenous culture and our Indigenous heritage. When this heritage is acknowledged in the Constitution, all of Australia will be a better place for it."





**THE HON NATALIE HUTCHINS MP**

MINISTER FOR  
ABORIGINAL  
AFFAIRS

"I am very pleased to join with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (Council) in celebrating their ten year anniversary. It is timely to consider the Victorian State Government's commitment to Aboriginal self-determination and the contributions that recent amendments made to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* will contribute towards self-determination for Aboriginal people and communities in Victoria. These changes recognise that all Aboriginal Ancestral Remains, and secret or sacred objects in the state, belong to the Traditional Owners from the areas in which they originated. Importantly, at this ten-year milestone, Council's new functions include facilitating the repatriation of Ancestral Remains and secret or

sacred objects to their Traditional Owners.

It is also opportune to mention the Government's commitment to the establishment of a new Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Fund and, as this fund grows, I look forward to the Council expanding its ability to support initiatives in the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage in new and exciting ways.

I commend the Council on its work to date and I look forward to Council's increased responsibilities, along with the strengthened roles of the Registered Aboriginal Parties whom they appoint, resulting in greater positive outcomes for Aboriginal cultural heritage in this state."

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**THE HON GAVIN JENNINGS MLC**

SPECIAL  
MINISTER OF  
STATE

"I am honoured to accept the invitation to contribute to the celebration of the ten-year anniversary of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council.

The Council has led the way in transitioning decision-making for the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage from government to Traditional Owner groups.

The Council brings together eminent and knowledgeable Victorian Traditional Owners to preside over decision-making about cultural heritage and is enshrined in the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Act) which came into force on 28 May 2007.

The origins of the Act can be traced to the 2004 discussion paper: 'Long Ago, Here Today' - Developing an Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Strategy for Victoria. The Victorian Government recognised our obligation to strengthen processes for protecting and managing Aboriginal cultural heritage.

A comprehensive consultation program with Aboriginal Victorians followed this paper's release. This led to the introduction of the Act which established the Council as the authority to appoint Aboriginal groups to manage their cultural heritage.

I am privileged to have worked with the distinguished group of Aboriginal Traditional Owners who make up the Council. I feel a great sense of political and personal satisfaction and humility in celebrating their achievements. It is a profound responsibility to promote Aboriginal cultural heritage and exercise great care and wisdom when appointing Registered Aboriginal Parties throughout Victoria.

This anniversary provides an opportunity to reflect upon Council's extraordinary achievements, and to welcome the extended responsibilities of the Council under recent amendments to the Act."



# STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS



**THE HON JUSTICE  
STEPHEN KAYE AM**

"It is a privilege to have been connected with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, and I warmly congratulate, and commend, the Council for its outstanding work, over the last ten years, in preserving, protecting and rehabilitating Aboriginal culture in the context of Victorian society.

The work of the Council is of fundamental importance to ensuring the rightful integral role of Aboriginal culture in the fabric of our community and of our nation. As the oldest surviving culture in the world, the intrinsic value of Aboriginal culture, and of its contribution to Australian society,

cannot be overstated. Like many others, having set out to learn about Aboriginal culture, I have found that there is so much that I can learn from it. The traditions, beliefs and spirituality, that are at the core of Aboriginal culture and life, are of unique value in understanding human life and our place in the world and the universe. The values enshrined in Aboriginal culture are precious and enriching.

By working to protect, and gain respect for, Aboriginal culture, the Council is thus playing a critical role in the life of our community, and I offer to it my very best wishes for continued success in that work."

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**KOORIE YOUTH  
COUNCIL**

"Country is a living legacy of our culture, Elders and Ancestors. The Koorie Youth Council congratulates the Aboriginal Heritage Council on its work caring for Country over the past ten years. The Council's work is crucial to helping Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people connect with special places in Victoria that tell the continuing story of our people. Over the last ten years the Aboriginal Heritage Council's presence has been welcome at Koorie Youth Council events. We have worked together to provide opportunities where the energy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people and the wisdom of our Traditional Owners & Elders come together to yarn, create and celebrate. We look forward to continuing to connect and learn from the Council into the future."





**MARIA PIZZI**

"The Council has been clear about its vision for Traditional Owners since its inception and has followed the same direction for the last ten years. This consistency has ensured the Secretariat knows how to progress, even though we have challenges and achievements, highs and lows.

Council members have also been clear since the beginning that their strength came from their unity and have always seen the Secretariat as part of the team. As a Secretariat, we have been at our best and delivered our best when we worked together to contribute to the achievement of the Council's vision. We come from a range of professional backgrounds – lawyers, linguists, educators, planners, historians,

natural resource managers, social workers and archaeologists. Wherever we came from, our work gives us the same opportunity. We are able to work with a group of Traditional Owners who are passionate about Aboriginal cultural heritage and united in making decisions that deliver formal legal recognition for Traditional Owners. This has never happened before in Victoria and we have the unique privilege of making our contribution to achieving the Council's vision.

I offer my sincere and profound thanks to all Council members who have generously shared their knowledge and friendship over our remarkable journey together. It's been the opportunity of a lifetime for me."

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**MUSEUM VICTORIA**

"Museums Victoria has worked closely with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (together with Aboriginal Victoria and the Victorian Government Solicitor's Office) over the past five years in relation to amendments (2016) to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* and the transition of responsibility for repatriation of Ancestral Remains and Secret Sacred Objects to the Council. This has involved a range of interagency meetings as well as a meeting between the Council and the Museums Board's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee.

Museums Victoria staff have presented an annual report to Council meetings; co-hosted state-wide workshops with Registered Aboriginal Parties and other key Aboriginal agencies and groups; and drafted detailed submissions on changes to the Amendments to the Act and to the Parliamentary Inquiry in to Registered Aboriginal Parties."



# STAKEHOLDER CONTRIBUTIONS



## RAP WORKING GROUP

"Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) now grow stronger! In 2007, with the initial appointment by the Council of Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation and then by progressive RAP appointments, RAPs have all experienced the new ways that were introduced to formalise our involvement with State Government and the private sector regarding the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage values across Victoria. As the primary source of knowledge for cultural heritage, our expert advice and assistance is regularly sought by government, proponents and the heritage sector. In Victoria, cultural heritage management and protection by Traditional Owners has always been strong from the 1980s through the provision of Part IIa under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Cultural Heritage Protection Act 1984 to the establishment of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*.

A huge turning point for RAPs came in 2012 when the unexpected Parliamentary Inquiry into the Establishment and Effectiveness of RAPs was launched by the Victorian Parliament at the time. Alongside the challenges of implementing the role of RAPs, the Inquiry reported on the positive value of managing and protecting our cultural heritage held by mainstream Victoria and equally the importance of Traditional Owners being involved on the ground and at policy level.

The *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2016* amendments have elevated RAP roles and responsibilities, giving greater legislative strength to our voices. Throughout these past ten years we have continually proven our resilience and capacity as RAPs in managing our businesses, which are focused on Traditional Owner participation and evaluation of Cultural Heritage Management Plans and associated assessment activities. Additionally, working together with private land owners and public land managers, and with individuals on recording and repatriation of our cultural heritage, our ability to control Aboriginal heritage advances steadily.

In acknowledging and celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Council and the status that cultural heritage now has with better resourcing from the Victorian Government and exciting new provisions like increasing the RAP role in compliance and how intangible heritage will be recognised, the next 10 years can only be even more deadly. The Council can look forward to reading annual reports from the RAPs where we will detail the on-Country delivery of our functions under the Act, but more importantly, to check in with our Aboriginal mobs and work towards fulfilling our aspirations for the Aboriginal people of Victoria."





## HEIDI VICTORIA MP

SHADOW  
MINISTER FOR  
ABORIGINAL  
AFFAIRS

"Traditional Owners have an incredibly important role in modern Australia. Not only as voices within their communities, but across the wider spectrum. With the ever-changing diversity in our demographic, it is essential we ensure current and future generations are aware of, and embrace our heritage.

Through strong leadership and advocacy, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council is doing some very significant work, especially in the areas of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains and the preservation of sacred and important objects. So much has been achieved in the past 10 years, and I send the Council all my best wishes and strength for the decades ahead."

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## VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF FORENSIC MEDICINE

"The Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine (VIFM) works closely with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council to ensure that Ancestral Remains are treated in a respectful and dignified manner. Over the past 10 years, VIFM and the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council have developed processes and effective communication to facilitate the timely return of Ancestral Remains to Country. In addition to practical collaboration, VIFM works with the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council to provide training and disseminate information to Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners across Victoria about the process of returning Ancestors and protecting Ancestors on Country."

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This document is also available in Word and PDF formats on the internet at <http://dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/victorian-aboriginal-heritage-council>



## MOVING FORWARD

Council's work towards a Council and Secretariat operating more autonomously from government has gained momentum this year, with considerable work undertaken to develop a six-phase Roadmap to Autonomy.

On 24 February 2017, Council and Aboriginal Victoria (AV) representatives workshopped the Roadmap to create a robust and dynamic vision for Council's achievement of independence.

Greater financial autonomy, control of its Secretariat and a more direct reporting line are all central to the success of the Roadmap's implementation.

Council and AV have agreed to work together on the implementation of the Roadmap and also committed to finalising a Joint Working Paper. The Paper will seek advice about Council's proposed autonomous organisational structure and transitional arrangements for Phases 4 to 6. We anticipate this Joint Working Paper will be finalised in the coming month.

We look forward to a significant report on achievements towards an autonomous Council in the next newsletter.

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