

Welcome to the third edition of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council's (Council) newsletter which outlines some of the Council's key work from the last six months! This is also my first edition as Chairperson.

I am honoured to lead the Council in its dedication to the protection and management of Victoria's Aboriginal cultural heritage and I thank the Council for nominating me as Chair.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Rodney Carter as outgoing Chair and Aunty Eleanor Bourke as outgoing Deputy Chair for their leadership. I also thank Tim Chatfield for his work as Interim Spokesperson for the Council.

I would also like to congratulate Jennifer Beer on her appointment as Deputy Chair and I look forward to working closely with Jennifer and the rest of the Council in the new year to see Victoria's Aboriginal cultural heritage protected and enjoyed for our future.

*Mick Harding
Chairperson*



Meeting with the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

The Council met the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, in June 2015.

Council discussed its key priorities for Victorian Traditional Owners and the management and protection of their Aboriginal cultural heritage. This included Traditional Owners' unique rights and responsibilities over Country, adequate resourcing and support for the repatriation of Aboriginal Ancestral Remains and sustainable Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs).



From left to right: Tim Chatfield, Rodney Carter, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, Mick Harding, Jennifer Beer, Eleanor Bourke and Nellie Flagg. Council members not present: Jim Berg, Wally Cooper and Jill Gallagher.

Promoting awareness of Aboriginal cultural heritage

Council is determined to see that the cultural rights and responsibilities of Traditional Owners are realised and respected. We have advocated this through working with stakeholders and making submissions in the last six months to:

- the review of the *Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006*
- the review of the *Protection of Moveable Cultural Heritage Act 1986*
- the review of the *Heritage Act 1995*
- Victoria's Creative Industries Strategy
- the Victorian Environment Assessment Council's Statewide Assessment of Public Land
- the draft Catchment Management Authorities' Indigenous Participation Guidelines
- the Inquiry into the Environmental Protection Authority
- the *Local Government Act 1989*

The Council also met with Film Victoria and the Victorian Local Governance Association. Council has also worked with the Municipal Association of Victoria to identify opportunities for strengthening relationships between Registered Aboriginal Parties and Local Government Authorities.

The 'Shared Values' Project

Council continues its work in partnership with the Heritage Council of Victoria (HCV) to strengthen the recognition and recording of Aboriginal heritage values for places with shared Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal values. The project initially focused on nine pilot sites, using these to develop a methodology for ongoing work in this area. Consultation has taken place with Traditional Owners regarding pilot sites and through a strategic workshop. Council and HCV are now undertaking further consultation with Traditional Owners and others regarding the project findings, materials and title.

The project is already seeing a new approach by Heritage Victoria in considering Aboriginal values in new and existing registrations on the (mostly post-contact) Heritage Register of Victoria.

Stakeholder engagement meeting in 2016

Council has decided to postpone its annual stakeholder meeting with Traditional Owners, industry, government and other land users from December to await the outcomes of amendments to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. Council will now hold this meeting in February 2016.

Supporting the protection, management and return of Ancestral Remains

The Council has continued to work for the protection and management of Ancestral Remains. Some examples of this work include:

- the Council and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria Ancestral Remains Joint Steering Group will soon release a report which summarises the issues identified at the five JSG regional meetings held in 2014 and 2015 and proposes recommendations to address these.
- Council met with Museum Victoria's Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee in September to discuss common concerns and future opportunities for collaboration
- Council is working to finalise its documentary on the return and protection of Ancestors in Victoria. The historic documentary features stories from Traditional Owners and other stakeholders across Victoria and is due for release in early 2016.
- In October, Council met with Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation (YYNAC) in Echuca. YYNAC took Council out to Gunbower Island and Ghow Swamp, and informed Council of various concerns regarding the protection of cultural heritage, Ancestral Remains in particular, in YYNAC's RAP area (pictures of visit below).



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