

# Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council

FACT SHEET

## WHAT IS THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HERITAGE COUNCIL?

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council was created under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* to ensure the preservation and protection of Victoria's rich Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. With important decision-making responsibilities and entirely Victorian Traditional Owner membership, the Council is the only statutory body of its kind in Australia.

The Council's vision is of a community that understands and respects Aboriginal Cultural Heritage and the cultural responsibilities of Traditional Owners. The Council recognises Traditional Owners as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of their Culture.

The Council is made up of up to eleven Traditional Owners who are appointed by the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs. Members of the Council must reside in Victoria and have demonstrated traditional or familial links to an area in Victoria. They are also required to have relevant knowledge or experience in the management of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage in Victoria.

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

- Making decisions on Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) applications
- Monitoring RAPs
- Protecting Ancestors' resting places and returning Ancestors to Country
- Secret or sacred objects in Victoria
- Managing the Victorian Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Fund
- Measures to promote understanding and awareness
- Providing Advice to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Secretary of the Department of Premier and Cabinet
- Reporting to the Minister.

## WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HERITAGE COUNCIL?

The *Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* recognises Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAP) as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage.

As an independent statutory body, the Council makes decisions on who is registered as a RAP in Victoria.

*"The mountains, the rivers, the sea, the volcanic plains – points within the landscape that would have been markers for our Old People of their cultural and spiritual places. Colonisation has forced changes on Country through the movement or complete removal of these places, so we must find those markers in our hearts and reinstate them on the landscape. Today, as modern people living an ancient Culture, we are comfortable enough in ourselves to draw a line on a map. We are strong enough in the old ways to know, in our hearts, that the line it is as accurate as we can make it today. To identify a road or a new waterway as a boundary is our answer to a problem not of our creation."*

**VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HERITAGE COUNCIL,  
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