

Media Release

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council

Friday 6 December 2013

THE VICTORIAN ABORIGINAL HERITAGE COUNCIL APPOINTS GUNDITJ MIRRORING TRADITIONAL OWNERS ABORIGINAL CORPORATION AND EASTERN MAAR ABORIGINAL CORPORATION AS REGISTERED ABORIGINAL PARTIES FOR THE SAME AREA

For the first time, two Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) have been appointed by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council for the same area.

At the December meeting of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (E MAC) was appointed as Victoria's tenth RAP under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (the Act) for an area in south-west Victoria east of the Shaw River and south-east of Dunkeld. At the same meeting, existing RAP Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC) was appointed for the same area. The decision is effective immediately.

GMTOAC and EMAC were previously determined by the Federal Court of Australia to be joint native title holders within the decision area. Council's decision-making under the Act must align with native title determinations.

The Chair of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, Rodney Carter, said the decision to appoint GMTOAC and EMAC as joint RAPs was a significant milestone.

"The Council's highest priority has always been the appointment of RAPs. RAPs are appointed in accordance with the Act and in accordance with the Council's decision-making principles. The Gunditj Mirring and Eastern Maar joint appointment means that for the first time two RAPs have joint statutory responsibilities for Aboriginal cultural heritage matters over an area of Victoria," said Mr Carter. "As the first jointly appointed RAPs, the Council is confident both organisations will work together conscientiously. We are firmly of the view that Traditional Owners are the right people to protect and preserve Aboriginal cultural heritage for the benefit of all Victorians."

The appointment area includes parts of the Moyne and Southern Grampians Shires.

Before appointing a RAP, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council takes into account a number of factors such as native title matters, traditional and familial links to Country and the capacity of the organisation to meet its responsibilities under the Act. In appointing more than one RAP for the same area, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council must be satisfied that there will not be any undue hindrance to the effective operation of the Act.

For more information about RAPs, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council or for contact details for the new RAPs go to <http://www.dpc.vic.gov.au/index.php/aboriginal-affairs/victorian-aboriginal-heritage-council> and follow the links to RAP decisions.

The area for which EMAC and GMTOAC are appointed as RAPs for the same area can be seen below.

