

Media Release

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council

Tuesday, 28 July 2009

TRADITIONAL OWNERS NOW MANAGING CULTURAL HERITAGE OVER MAJORITY OF VICTORIA

Traditional Owners have now been recognised as primary decision makers in relation to Aboriginal cultural heritage management across more than half of Victoria.

At the July meeting of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council the ninth Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) was appointed under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* effective immediately.

The Chair of Victoria's Aboriginal Heritage Council, Eleanor Bourke, said the Council's decision to appoint Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation as a RAP over central Victoria was a significant milestone for the Council.

"The Council's highest priority is the appointment of RAPs. The Taungurung appointment means local Traditional Owner organisations have statutory responsibilities for Aboriginal heritage matters over 54% of the area of Victoria," Mrs Bourke said.

"This is an important step towards the full implementation of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* which confirms Aboriginal people as the primary guardians, keepers and knowledge holders of Aboriginal cultural heritage."

Mrs Bourke said this decision is another step towards recognising Aboriginal people's cultural rights to speak for their Country.

The Taungurung Clans registered area includes much of the Shires of Mitchell and Murrindindi as well as parts of Mansfield, Yarra Ranges, Strathbogie, Campaspe, Macedon Ranges and the City of Greater Bendigo.

Each RAP is responsible for evaluating cultural heritage management plans in their defined area. The plans are required where areas of Aboriginal significance might be impacted by development.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Richard Wynne said, "The Aboriginal Heritage Act allows traditional owners as RAPs to provide the best local advice to developers on cultural heritage issues, simplifying who to deal with and ultimately speeding up and reducing the cost of development."

Before appointing a RAP, the Council takes into account a number of factors such as links to Country, native title matters and the capacity of the organisation to meet their responsibilities under the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

For more information about Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs), the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council or for contact details for the new RAP go to www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au and follow the links to cultural heritage.

Ends.