

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**14 August 2023**

**Djab Wurrung Birthing Tree Desecration**

Unknown persons have desecrated a culturally significant Djab Wurrung Birthing Tree near Buangor on Thursday night, breaking through a protective fence, spraying graffiti and drilling holes into the trunk of the tree.

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) staff were contacted by Major Roads Projects Victoria (MRPV) on Friday morning following the discovery and have met with project staff onsite to assess the extent of the harm.

The Birthing Trees are well known in the Eastern Maar Society and are Sacred on the basis that the process of giving birth in itself, is a Sacred Ceremony.

EMAC has informed First Peoples State Relations of the Harm to an Aboriginal Place and an investigation has now begun under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

EMAC is the Prescribed Body Corporate Agent that represents the Rights & Assertions of the greater Eastern Maar Society. EMAC is also a Registered Aboriginal Party under the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006.

Cultural Heritage is an important part of Country and relates to the story of its people. Deliberate acts of harm to our heritage are far too often an occurrence. The deliberate act of desecration to the sacred Djab Wurrung Birthing Tree is a disgraceful act and has had a significant impact upon the Eastern Maar Society, therefore EMAC is offering a **\$10,000 Reward** for information that will lead directly to a prosecution and conviction for this act of harm to an Aboriginal Place.<sup>1</sup>

If you know who the individual(s) is/are that has caused this harm, we encourage you to contact Victoria Police by calling Crime Stoppers on 1800 300 000 or First Peoples State Relations by sending an email to [compliance.aboriginalvictoria@dpc.vic.gov.au](mailto:compliance.aboriginalvictoria@dpc.vic.gov.au) .

Quote attributable to Eastern Maar Citizen and Djab Wurrung person Yarran Bundle:

*“Djab Wurrung Women say Wantayngeenkopa leekanyoong ngootook? - What the matter within you? We will continue to navigate the violence perpetrated and directed onto us in strength, love respect and welcoming beauty, a true reflection of who we are, as Djab Wurrung People, our proud, ancient to present, interconnected extension of Our Sacred Tyarr (Country).”*

Quote attributable to EMAC Acting Chief Executive Officer William Briggs:

*“We are deeply saddened by the desecration of the Birthing Tree due to the high nature of cultural significance the tree holds. EMAC will work closely with all involved to ensure that those who are responsible are held accountable.”*

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<sup>1</sup> The information provided must lead to a conviction. The total reward is \$10,000 and may be shared between persons. Payment will be made upon the expiration of any appeal period of a conviction. EMAC may only pay the reward if the person co-operates as reasonably required to secure a conviction.