



Eastern Maar
Aboriginal Corporation

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Thursday 25, January 2024

ANCESTRAL RECLAMATION TO GULIDJAN MEERRENG (COUNTRY)

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) is bringing ancestral remains back to their rightful place on Country. Unearthed in March 2019 during upgrade works at Barongarook Creek Bridge, Colac Victoria, led by Major Roads Projects Victoria (MRPV), this significant discovery initiated a collaborative effort.

Victoria Police contacted EMAC and through a legislated process were delegated lead agency in the recovery of the ancestral remains which were below the built road and footpath. EMAC worked alongside MRPV and contractors VEC to facilitate a seamless continuation of works while the recovery proceeded. The cooperative nature of all parties is now regarded as a best practice model in the Victorian construction industry.

EMAC is the representative corporate body for the Eastern Maar and Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) for the protection of Aboriginal Cultural Heritage. Part of the response to the discovery was the collaborative design and build of a new memorial park as a place for reflection and solitude for our community and the wider Colac community.

In a poignant private ceremony, Eastern Maar citizens will reunite their ancestor with Gulidjan meereng (Country) at this memorial site. Ebony Hickey, a member of the Eastern Maar community, emphasised the gravity of this act, acknowledging the mix of solemnity and integrity that marks this occasion.

She said returning our Ancestor to their place of burial was not the same as them never having had to leave it.

“It’s something we never wish to have to do, therefore doing it with privacy, compassion and integrity is so very important,”

Eastern Maar community will have a public memorial service in the coming months for the broader Colac community.