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**Media Release**

**Cultural Heritage Management Delays**

Recent news articles referring to delays of Cultural Heritage Management Plans (CHMP) have painted a challenging picture for developers on a statewide level. This reporting has focussed on the time taken for Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAP's) to assign field workers.

Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) is one of 11 RAPs in Victoria and have not received any complaints in relation to timeliness of service requested. EMAC can demonstrate that from the time of request for services to onsite participation is on average only two weeks.

Whilst EMAC does not represent or speak on behalf of other RAP's EMAC is concerned that frustrations being expressed in the public domain are being used to narrate a statewide systemic problem. Any claim there is a seven month wait time for services from all 11 RAP's is not accurate.

Considering the current discussions about the timeframes for Cultural Heritage Management Plans in Victoria, EMAC wishes to emphasise our commitment to the highest standards in cultural heritage assessments. A pivotal element of our success is our broad responsive pool of Eastern Maar Citizens cultural heritage fieldworkers who are central to our operations. At EMAC, we firmly adhere to the principle that these fieldwork roles must be filled by traditional owners, ensuring the authenticity and integrity of our work in the protection of our communities cultural heritage.

It is EMAC's position that the role of a Registered Aboriginal Party is firstly the protection of Aboriginal Heritage as intended in the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006. The RAP is one primary component in the process of cultural heritage management and exists within the broader heritage protection system at State and local levels, these include independent Heritage Advisors and Archaeologists engaged by the project developers (CHMP sponsor), and the state government itself.

EMAC's experience highlights the need for a revised funding structure that aligns with the cyclical nature of cultural heritage work. By implementing a funding model that can scale up or down based on demand, we can maintain our effectiveness and continue to uphold our high standards in protecting our cultural heritage. While EMAC has the benefit of a dedicated workforce of Traditional Owners, our ability to continue meeting these demands effectively is contingent on a funding model that can adapt to these fluctuating needs.

EMAC remains unwavering in our role as custodians and advocates for our cultural heritage and ensuring that our rich heritage is preserved and respected in line with Victoria's development needs. We remain committed to efficiency, professionalism and working with all of our stakeholders.

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