



Eastern Maar
Aboriginal Corporation

Tower Hill, Dhauwurd-Wurrung Country

EASTERN MAAR Nation Statement

EASTERN MAAR

Water is Life: Roadmap for Traditional Owner Access to Water Nation Statement





NGOOTJOON PARREEYT -
PARREEYT POONTEEN

The Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) is the Prescribed Body Corporate and Registered Aboriginal Party that represents the Cultural Obligations, Rights and Assertions of the Eastern Maar as described in our Country Plan *Meerreengeeye Ngakeepoorryeeyt*.

The Eastern Maar comprise five major Maar/Mara language groups, being Gulidjan, Gadubanud, Keerray, Djargurd & Dauwurd wurrung. Additionally, Eastern Maar include Djab Wurrung, a West Kulin speaking group. Eastern Maar is our self-descriptive in context as outlined above. Maar/Mara is translated to the English word "People".

The following Statement is made on behalf of the Eastern Maar in accordance with our governance processes.

Meerreeng, Parreeyt pa Moorrnong (Land, Water and Sky) are zoetic constitutional balancing components of the greater Maar bio-cultural landscape. With respect and adherence to Maar law/lore, a reciprocating relationship with these elements, each remain the key definers of what and who the Eastern Maar are. These definers are manifested in our strong, ongoing, and continuously evolving and living culture, unmovable identity, and our inherent obligation to safeguard our Ancestral Territory from the existential threat of ongoing colonisation.

For meaningful, genuine, considered, and progressive dialogue to occur, it is important to firstly acknowledge Eastern Maar's constitutional parity with that of the Crown. It is this constitutional parity that protects Eastern Maar sovereignty and parreeyt rights.

Parreeyt, in context of Maar Ancestral Territory is unceded in any legal framework including those developed by the Crown of England, it's governance structures and delegations of authority to what is now known as Australia and the State of Victoria. Eastern Maar have never consented, surrendered, nor granted rights of access to the Crown in any capacity.

This assuming of ownership by the Crown was done so with a campaign of wholesale violence resulting in occupation of Maar Ancestral Territory. This occupation continues to be upheld today via the many laws, regulations, policies and procedures, well-resourced government institutions and vested external parties, that proactively promote an intimidating and violent enforcement regime to protect those interests, alongside a narrative into the broader public designed to marginalise and misalign Traditional Owners generally. The financial investment made into the deliberate destruction of Eastern Maar society over a period of 190 years has been exorbitant for the reward it has brought to the Crown and its subjects.

With that in mind, the Waterways Roadmap plan presents an opportunity for all parties to step toward depoliticising parreeyt and promote parreeyt for what it really is, in accordance with the Eastern Maar law/lore. It is the right time for the new Waterways Roadmap to be brave, progressive, and responsive to the opportunity Eastern Maar presents. This opportunity is a parreeyt-driven social plan for the re-investment in Eastern Maar Society, our governance structures, language, knowledge, and obligations to protect Parreeyt in accordance with Maar law/lore, for the benefit of all Victorians.

As such, Eastern Maar challenges the Crown's intent for parreeyt management in its current form. This includes parreeyt being reduced to a resource that is sectioned, monetised and compartmentalised for the purposes of financial management.

The Maar know that all parreeyt is bio-cultural in its entirety irrespective of the titled "allocations" such as "cultural flows" for example.

It is the intent of this statement to share both our position on parreeyt, to articulate why and promote the opportunity for a greater collaborative bio-cultural values-based approach for the future.

The Eastern Maar strongly encourage the Crown to acknowledge and respect the cultural obligations, the assertion of rights and self-determination of the Eastern Maar to develop and apply our own policies and procedures with precision and clear intent for effective change in the interest of parreeyt and all associated bio-cultural values. That the Crown acknowledge the disparity in the current relationship it has with Eastern Maar and begin a reset process that will establish a relationship founded upon real recognition of Eastern Maar's unceded authority to speak for parreeyt, and to make decisions for parreeyt. To explain why current regimes for parreeyt management is in direct conflict with Eastern Maar law/lore and values, it is also important to understand our relationship with parreeyt to begin with.

Firstly, Eastern Maar law/lore requires us to question the how, why and when any new interaction with parreeyt is required and/or the appropriateness of that interaction.

As a higher end foundation of these laws/lore, we know Meerreeng, Parreeyt, Moorrnong, pa Maar (land, water, sky, and people) to be intrinsically co-dependent upon the other to sustain high levels of health and prosperity. This reciprocating co-dependency and co-beneficiary relationship model is akin to that of a family and thought of as so, in the highest order. Together we are each of the same and inseparable. Unable to be compartmentalised and segmented.

Any interaction should not be to the detriment of the values we are obliged to consider.

Secondly, Eastern Maar relationship with parreeyt is further underpinned by our understanding of life & death and what happens to our Spirit when the body is no longer required. It is a fundamental belief of the Maar, that our Spirit comes from Meerreeng, and our Spirit goes back to Meerreeng. Collectively, our Meerreeng, Parreeyt, Moorrnong, Allam Meen, Bunjil, pa Maar (Land, Water, Sky, Ancestors, Creator and People) are collectively, the Dreaming. A creative force of a self-perpetuating omnipresence. The Spirit of our ancestors is in the Meerreeng we walk upon, and parreeyt being the medium used to travel through meerreeng. This knowledge of parreeyt heightens its significance and underpins our relationship, with a sacredness rarely paralleled by other natural elements. This relationship with parreeyt has broader and long-term benefits for all Victorians. The Crown's acceptance of our values, relationship & principles, will promote and achieve broader environmental & biodiversity targets, cleaner water, greater water security and longer-term economic benefits in context of real climate change and other current and impending pressures. Accepting our values, relationship and principles also elevates parreeyt for its spiritual importance within the broader community, offering a greater perspective to Australian society within context of the localised bio-cultural landscape in which they live.

It is in this relationship with parreeyt that we relate to it as we would a family member, as with individual relationships with an Elder and/or a newborn infant. With a sense of concern, caution, reverence, and calm optimism. Therefore Parreeyt is Sacred. And with that sacredness comes an obligation to act as its advocate, its guardian, its community, its family.

Parreeyt is a bio-cultural value that has been "managed" inappropriately via the policies and procedures of successive Australian and Victorian governments whose ideology is firmly rooted in the false narrative of aqua nullius and colonisation.

This compartmentalisation of parreeyt now generates a transaction-based relationship that normalises terms such as "unallocated water" and "allocations of cultural flows".





Thanang Poonart (Hopkins Falls).
Dhauwurd-Wurrung and Kirrae
Whurrung Country

The current governance system for parreeyt management is one borne out of colonisation, dispossession, and a race-based campaign to dispossess Eastern Maar of parreeyt. This regime alienates and marginalises Eastern Maar from our role as contributors and benefactors of parreeyt. This regime continues in the year 2022 in the form of the *Water Act 1989*. This Act is but one part of many mechanisms that have acted to suppress the role of Eastern Maar in all matters bio-cultural as exemplified in Section 7: the Crown's "right" to use, flow and control of all water in a waterway and all ground water. The Eastern Maar remind the Crown that we have never ceded any right, ownership, or control of parreeyt to the Crown in any manner at any time. That said, Eastern Maar remain open to genuine dialogue with the Crown based on a real recognition of our rights discussion.

Further to that point, Eastern Maar objects to the narrative that reduces the status of Eastern Maar's inherent rights to that of the "rights" of water leaseholders via the current system's limited rights for water shareholder model. "Entitlement holders" as referred to in the discussion paper's statement are limited rights holders subject to the conditions set by the Crown and does not at any time take from the Crown its ultimate "ownership". Eastern Maar remain outright owners of rights and obligations to care and make decisions for parreeyt.

Eastern Maar also declines to use the vernacular of the current management regime and challenge the notions and definitions of "set asides" "allocations" and "unallocated" in context of the values and relationship outlined above.

Eastern Maar's ownership of and/or access to parreeyt cannot, nor should it be, recognised as part of a process founded in the doctrine of aqua nullius as outlined above. Considering the magnitude of the injustice inflicted upon Eastern Maar, it is not acceptable that Eastern Maar be subjected to more trauma by the Crown's persistence in confining Eastern Maar to a licence/permit model that recognises only limited "rights" and further upholds the notion of aqua nullius. However, it remains Eastern Maar's strongest desire to work with the Crown to establish a new order of rights recognition and resulting processes and its accompanying mechanisms that acknowledgement Eastern Maar's parreeyt sovereignty whilst enhancing the longer-term water security for all Victorians. Eastern Maar should not be confined to the current regime for all the reasons outlined above.

At the very least, Eastern Maar assert that the role of all Traditional Owners' decision-making authority is equal to, if not greater than, the decision-making status of the Crown within their respective Ancestral Territorys. This provides the Crown with opportunity to act based on the values it claims to possess and co-develop a new model of operation.

The new model will acknowledge the cultural obligations, rights, and assertions of Eastern Maar.

- This requires the Crown to recognise the legitimacy of our rights, law/lore and governance processes as being unceded to theirs and in equal step.
- The Crown must commit to a process of genuine transfer of power and accountability to effectively enable self-determination. It must also recognise that Eastern Maar's rights and assertions are unique to our nation and will require a unique response.
- All parreeyt management going forward must be based on the understanding that all flows are bio-cultural and requires a reset on how decisions are made.
- Eastern Maar are the Cultural Guardians of Meerreeng, Parreeyt and Moornong for our respective Ancestral Territory. This is a role of unceded authority that has been vested to us by Maar Allam Meen (Ancestors).

Eastern Maar's objective for the coming 30 years is driven by all that has been articulated in this statement. Regarding parreeyt, it is Eastern Maar's primary objective to restore waterways to a healthy condition as determined by its bio-cultural value within the broader landscape. This will in turn provide a stable foundation that supports a rich and abundant biodiversity, providing greater contributions to the overall health of all Victorians.

In succinct form:

- Eastern Maar management will focus on bio-cultural regions and landscapes.
- Eastern Maar recognise that fresh, brackish, and saline systems are of equal value and must be managed as part of the greater bio-cultural landscape.
- Eastern Maar view Country through the lens of a bio-cultural landscape containing intricate, complex, and multi-layered cultural values in an anastomosis manner.
- Eastern Maar seeks to work with neighbouring Traditional Owners where shared values may be identified that intersect across bio-cultural regions, with an intent to foster a greater landscape-based bio-cultural regional management approach.
- Eastern Maar supports all Traditional Owners in the practice of their culture on waterways.
- Eastern Maar's goal is to reinstate our role as primary knowledge holders, decision makers and practitioners for parreeyt with all the associated cultural obligation, shared benefit and accountability.
- Eastern Maar are committed to this objective and believe that the reinstatement of our role is achievable with genuine recognition by the Crown and a clear willingness on the part of the Crown to work with us.

A “water return” would and should only be an accepted outcome if it is one component of a greater redress action in context of this statement.

Eastern Maar’s Unceded Rights and Access to Water

Eastern Maar challenges the licencing of “unallocated water” if it is intended by the Crown to be a means of complete redress to Eastern Maar for past injustices perpetrated directly or indirectly by the Crown. A “water return” would and should only be an accepted outcome if it is one component of a greater redress action in context of this statement. Again, this is an achievable objective should the Crown commit to a process of recognition of Eastern Maar cultural obligations, rights, and assertions. However, to achieve this as an initial outcome, this would require the development of a new legal framework and mechanism to account for Eastern Maar’s unceded rights and own governance processes.

Eastern Maar Law/Lore warrants a request for a full account of the uses and sources of parreeyt on our Ancestral Territory. This will be collated and presented in a readable format to enable Eastern Maar an informed, free, and informed consent to ascertain what volumes are already “allocated” by the Crown for use in industry, agriculture, environment etc.

Eastern Maar asserts our ownership of parreeyt rights including “allocated and unallocated” parreeyt as authorised by Eastern Maar law/lore. Eastern Maar however invites the Crown to work collaboratively with Eastern Maar to explore modes of management that do not currently exist that will be in accordance with Eastern Maar law/lore equal to the law of the Crown.

Eastern Maar will not pay fees to the Crown for access to parreeyt. If Eastern Maar were supportive of a

“handback model”, that model too must recognise and reflect Eastern Maar sovereignty. Eastern Maar self-determination includes the exploration of all options available to Eastern Maar for benefits that are enjoyed by the Crown and other lease holders/ stakeholders. Eastern Maar has at no time consented to the Crown’s usurping of parreeyt and the application of fee structures then imposed for conditional access.

Therefore action 2.4 concerning the fees and charges the government has been collecting for the parreeyt which has been denied to Eastern Maar for more than 200 years further disempowers and dispossesses our people and denies our right to self-determination on our Country by monetising parreeyt and requiring us to beg for “free” access to our own resources. Dictating to Traditional Owners how they may use their resources, especially if it is to support economic development which the Crown has enjoyed for the past 200 years is not supported Eastern Maar are not opposed to the access of parreeyt by all other Victorians and would welcome the opportunity to work closely with the Crown to accommodate allocations in a new parreeyt governance model. Eastern Maar promote a shared water holder model that ensures decisions made about parreeyt are not to the detriment of the bio-cultural values possessed by Eastern Maar. Eastern Maar believe this is an achievable model that can mitigate climate change challenges for the immediate future and existing challenges that are the result of existing parreeyt management now.

Lake Beac is a Ramsar wetland,
Gulidjan Country

Reintroducing Eastern Maar's role as a waterways landscape manager

Under current management laws of the Crown and resulting governance processes, Eastern Maar has no recognised statutory decision-making platform that accommodates a full, free, and prior consent model of participation and contribution. This continues to be contrary to the obligations Australia has signed to uphold as part of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Eastern Maar has within its Ancestral Territory many waterbodies including highly valued Ramsar listed wetlands, crater lakes, playa lakes, saline wetlands, fresh wetlands, brackish wetlands, extensive aquifer deposits, watercourses including "named and unnamed" waterways. Eastern Maar are acutely aware of the complexities of trying to manoeuvre through the multiple layers of existing parreeyt management agencies and their policies and procedures. Current models of management are problematic, cumbersome, and ineffective.

Lake Bullen Merri Lake Reserve exemplifies the current practice of wetland management as part of what is known as the Western District Lakes. Lake Bullen Merri has a boundary that is determined by the Doctrine of Accretion on one side with fixed boundaries for the remainder.

The below example is the management model of all parreeyt in the Eastern Maar Ancestral Territory and highlights the bureaucratic malarkey that is prevalent in siloed entities. Furthermore, this model of management is itself a significant factor in the detriment to parreeyt generally.

"Unreserved Crown Land" is a term associated with parreeyt in context of riverbeds, creek beds and seabed. The Traditional Owner Settlement Act delineates such a tenure as out of bounds for Traditional Owner conversation. "Unreserved Crown Land" are unceded lands. Whilst the Crown grapples within itself about who has delegated accountabilities, "unreserved Crown lands" are more often neglected by the Crown and subjected to a range of infringements by other Crown subjects.

The Curdies River that flows from Cobden to Peterborough recently gained notoriety for a high number of dead cattle that had been discovered within it, accompanied by a blue green algal bloom. It was determined that DELWP would lead the recovery of 21 dead cows and have them buried on adjacent private property. It is not the charter of DELWP to undertake such works; but no other Crown

In the multitude of conversations Eastern Maar participate in for this one wetland, each of the following outputs have a separate agency/department lead. These are:

1. The Lakebed (Parks Victoria)
2. Public access (Corangamite Shire, DELWP, Parks Victoria)
3. Blue Green Algae Bloom (Corangamite Shire)
4. Recreation (boating, skiing) (Better Boating Victoria, Victoria Police)
5. Fishing (including stocking and enforcement) (Victorian Fisheries Authority)
6. Water extraction licencing (Southern Rural Water)
7. Catchment Management (Corangamite Catchment Management Authority)
8. Biodiversity - Flora and Fauna Management (DELWP)
9. Flood Management (DELWP)
10. Emergency Response (Fire, Search & Rescue) (DELWP, Victoria Police, CFA)
11. Public Asset Management (Corangamite Shire)
12. Stakeholder Management (Topic dependant)
13. Committee of Management Foreshore (Corangamite Shire)
14. Other interested parties - Camperdown Angling Club
15. Contaminations - Environment Protection Authority Victoria
16. Cultural Heritage and Native Title - Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

agency would take responsibility. Such a response is typical of treating the result and not treating the cause. The Curdies River, like so many, has no fencing that separates stocked private land and the waterway. This results in dead livestock frequently fouling parreeyt with decomposing carcasses. The quality of water is compromised by urine, excrement, pugging, farm runoff, chemical runoff and the encroachment of agricultural plants and environmental pests. With the onset of climate change, algal bloom, high nutrient counts, salinity, and soil erosion will continue to rapidly expand. A bio-cultural values-based management regime will mitigate these threats and risks and afford Eastern Maar stakeholders such as our farming communities' greater certainty and climate change security.

But for all the concerns Eastern Maar possess for this one waterway, there remains thousands of others within our Ancestral Territory that are at the whim of an ineffective and destabilising management regime that cannot and does not accept accountability and refuses all opportunities and invitation from Eastern Maar for our intervention. The response to such opportunities and invitations are consistently negated by the limitations of an ongoing colonised mindset toward Eastern Maar. Current management regimes devised by the Crown are a self-perpetuating regime of harm and decline as evidenced in the continued downfall trends in parreeyt values right across the state of Victoria.

Further to the role Eastern Maar has by authority of our unceded obligations, Eastern Maar's resources do not reflect the demand created for responding to the ineffective bureaucracy applied in the management of parreeyt. This scenario creates a vacuum for accurate information going out and coming in to both the Eastern Maar Nation and the broader Victorian community. The current management model promotes an environment of mistrust between Eastern Maar and agencies/departments, and further still, even between agencies/departments internal to government. It too creates deficit workplace cultures with a "too hard" inclination when faced with enquiries from Eastern Maar. This demand upon Eastern Maar's capacity to fill these gaps are further compounded by decisions made in the absence of any dialogue or input from Eastern Maar at the inception stage or by decisions made that are contrary to our objectives. However, it is argued that more harmful in the current management regime are decisions that are not made. A practice that remains of great concern and alarm to Eastern Maar.

In that regard, action 2.3 is partially supported to ensure that Traditional Owners are made aware of issues and opportunities not just to "return water" but to properly manage parreeyt and make decisions for all water, not just "unallocated water", and that the actions required are fully funded in line with the expectations of self-determination for Eastern Maar Citizens. The proposal to identify and overcome barriers, including any legislative amendments, is fully supported and should be fully funded as an immediate priority and Traditional Owners must co-design with the government a criteria for understanding, prioritising the consideration of, and addressing any "third party impacts" relative to the rights of Eastern Maar to manage parreeyt.

With regards to parreeyt management, Eastern Maar believe that this is opportunity for the Crown to overhaul its current management regime including funding models to include the role Eastern Maar are reinstating for ourselves. In the area of natural resource management, Eastern Maar recommend the Crown develop and implement a funding model that sees Eastern Maar funded with parity to all corresponding Government Departments independent of Crown interference. Activating true Eastern Maar self-determination and enabling Eastern Maar bio-cultural values and objectives to be delivered with partnering agencies and departments in support will also be a benefitting Closing the Gap measure and effective reconciliation in action.

Agency and department partnerships and any prospective management agreements with all parreeyt agencies and departments who possess delegations of decision-making powers should be pursued under this new model.

For meaningful and long-term tangible success, there is a requirement for the Crown to invest in the Eastern Maar, co-develop a new parreeyt management model that captures and accurately reflects Eastern Maar bio-cultural objectives and enhance Eastern Maar capacity to deliver on-ground works. This new management regime should not hinder, negate nor impinge upon the Eastern Maar. Investment in the Eastern Maar by the Crown is not a new initiative. The Crown has previously made significant investment in the form of restriction of movement, kidnapping of children, mass murder, enslavement, torture, sexual assault, forced indentured work and the retainment of income streams of the Eastern Maar. The Crown's investment has sought the reduction of language use and customary practices, the denial of property rights and human rights.

We now call for the Crown to reinvest in the Eastern Maar for the right outcomes.

Immediate Outcomes/Opportunities

- Eastern Maar assert the right to have mandated delegations of empowered decision making that will work alongside existing Crown governance processes for the management all parreeyt within our Ancestral Territory until a new model is co-developed.
 - therefore, requiring Eastern Maar to apply to government for access and to action our parreeyt rights as described in action 2.1 of the draft Water is Life plan is not supported and Eastern Maar notes that the plan identifies that the funding required to implement these actions proposed in the plan is not currently approved and cannot be guaranteed.
 - action 3.2 is partially supported, to the extent that the Victorian Government would provide the required resources to transfer power and resources from “the water sector” to Traditional Owners, not as a negotiated agreement requiring ministerial approval, and then Traditional owners would take over the required decision-making and responsibilities for parreeyt and then work in partnership with relevant “water sector” partners and other stakeholders.
- Eastern Maar assert the right to be part of a review of parreeyt management within our Ancestral Territory. The development of a Terms of Reference for such a review and afforded the appropriate resources to action any recommendations that may be promoted because of any such review.
- Eastern Maar strongly encourage the Crown to seriously consider Eastern Maar’s invitation to work alongside each other within the principles of parity in governance structures and the opportunities identified in this statement.

Since European occupation, all parreeyt within Eastern Maar’s Ancestral Territory has been manipulated by intrusive practices. These works were often and continue to be undertaken on the premise that they are “improvements” for the purposes of industry, primary producing and township development.

These “improvements” include:

- Diversion schemes (eg: Lake Corangamite, Cundare Pool, and Lough Calvert)
- Wetland drainage
- Watercourse channelling
- Wholesale Habitat Destruction
- Native flora and native fauna eradication
- State Sponsored Introduction of inappropriate plants such as Tall Wheat Grass
- Inappropriate modifications including clearing, grazing, and cropping of dry lakebeds
- Dam construction in waterways and waterbodies

- Excessive drilling and installation of bores
- Extinction and endangerment of critical flora and fauna species

The Crown is accountable for the legacy of issues created by the ongoing colonisation of Eastern Maar’s Ancestral Territories. This is perpetuated by the monotone culture within its governments, departments, and agents. The lack of best practice principles for the benefit of parreeyt have resulted in significantly degraded bio-cultural values and altered landscapes in a way that has overwhelmingly been to the detriment of Traditional Owners, all Victorians, and including the Crown.

To assist the Crown in recognising the destructive role it has played within the Eastern Maar Ancestral Territory and to highlight the restorative role the Crown could have in support of an Eastern Maar lead recovery, Eastern Maar propose a range of empowered and authoritative recommendations to firstly neutralise the current trends of decline and begin to implement measures to reverse those trends.

Eastern Maar intends to lead a recovery of bio-cultural values and call for the Crown to support the Eastern Maar with a whole of government approach response, resourcing, and funding for Eastern Maar’s **Pang-ngooteekeeya weeng malangeepa ngeeye (Remembering our Future) Bio-cultural Landscape Strategy.**

The Eastern Maar Strategy will work to finesse the bureaucracy, develop prescriptive objectives and corresponding plans, effect understanding of Value, adapt measurables in response to bio-cultural value, afford greater certainty to stakeholders and mitigate climate change on localised levels.

Resourcing

It has not gone unnoticed that any action in the plan requiring financial and other investment is not guaranteed and is subject to the usual government bureaucratic bargaining. The government’s allocation of scarce resources has, for generations, created a destructive legacy which now requires reviewing of the funding models of Traditional Owner Corporations to better reflect the resources required by Traditional Owner Corporations and the ongoing nature of the works required, to rectify current declining trends.

A review of funding models for Traditional Owner Corporations should be undertaken with a term of reference that reflects the self-determination, cultural obligations, and assertion of rights by respective Traditional Owners.

Current funding sources are departmentalised, short term, short sighted and reflect the fractured operational nature of government itself.

For Traditional Owner Corporations to participate in the Crown’s land and water management regime, Traditional Owner Corporations are often required to compromise on fundamental values for gains that can only be described as politically motivated and reinforcing of a status quo of colonisation.

Funding should be provided on par with that of a departmental scale and independent of the government of the day. Such a funding model should give long-term certainty to Traditional Owner Corporations and of a singular source. Empower Traditional Owner self-determination, reflect Traditional Owner cultural obligations and enable a platform for long term vision, planning and adaptive implementation of bio-cultural recovery strategies.

It is Eastern Maar’s informed position that funding “opportunities” will be declined if that opportunity does not support the long-term objectives of the Eastern Maar Citizens. All works undertaken by Eastern Maar will be guided by cultural obligation, real empowerment, and demonstrable tangible benefits for Eastern Maar Citizens. Eastern Maar works undertaken will not be driven by bureaucratic KPIs and politicking. Traditional Owners have a foundation role in land, water and resource management that is in equal standing, at the very least, with the Crown, its institutions, and governance processes.

Cultural Obligation is founded in the knowledge of Country through our intergenerational relationship with it including authority to speak on its behalf.

Transforming Foundations

The Victorian people have an opportunity to effect long-overdue change.

Eastern Maar will work with the Crown and its governments to build capacity and resilience within existing governance processes that will create an environment for adaptive change regarding the evolving nature of the Crown’s relationship with Traditional Owners as an empowered rights-based demographic, unceded to the Crown nor any other foreign power.

Eastern Maar understands that current state agencies and departments are challenged by Traditional Owner assertions of rights in context of existing laws, regulations. Policies, and procedures that are founded in the colonisation of a people. Eastern Maar have a role in the decolonisation process of Commonwealth and State Governments and encourage such parties to build their capacity to better respond appropriately, and professionally. Eastern Maar encourage greater conversation about the role of Government within the Eastern Maar Ancestral Territory and the need for recognition of its failures.

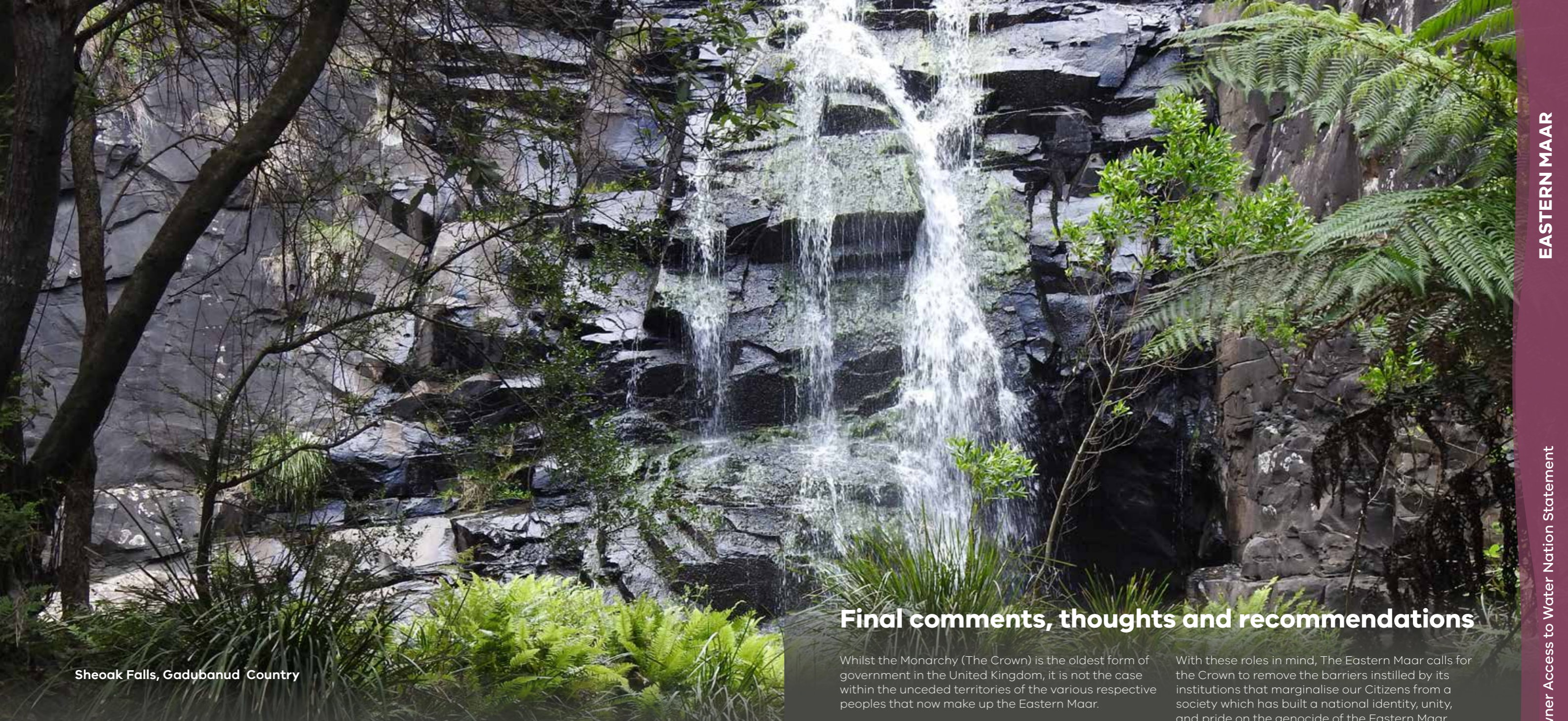
Eastern Maar encourage the Government to create a culture of an openness to Eastern Maar knowledge bases, transfer of knowledge methodologies and the application of that knowledge within the Eastern Maar Ancestral Territory as held by the Eastern Maar.

Eastern Maar invite Government of all levels to work collaboratively to address and mitigate climate change and the accompanying heightened risks of flood and bushfire, biodiversity decline and extinction, reduction in natural resources and forecasted increases of pestilence.

Eastern Maar invite all stakeholders, including our primary producers (farming communities) to work closely with Eastern Maar to better provide greater food security for the future including parreeyt security.

Eastern Maar invite a whole of government and community approached response to working together based on genuine recognition of Eastern Maar sovereignty. Genuine recognition of Eastern Maar knowledge and genuine recognition of the obligations and role Eastern Maar has with regards to our Ancestral Territory.

Eastern Maar will co-develop a management regime for parreeyt with the Crown when the Crown is ready to do so.



Sheoak Falls, Gadubanud Country

Overview of Discussion Paper, Roadmap implementation and other government processes

The Eastern Maar remain optimistic that the current Waterways Road Map will reflect the opportunity that is present in Eastern Maar's invitation for a greater collaborative approach to parreeyt management whilst recognising the unceded rights, assertions, and obligations of the Eastern Maar.

At the time of writing this statement, the Waterways Road Map is challenging to read as a progressive, strong, direct, and brave document. It is unsteady, risk averse and can only be consumed as a maintenance schedule.

The Eastern Maar encourage greater conversation about parreeyt with the intent to better understand

it as a value in context of the broader bio-cultural landscape that is the Eastern Maar Ancestral Territory. The Waterways Road Map does not facilitate a platform for expansion and instead works to contain the influence of Traditional Owners to that of one within existing frameworks that again have been created to place the Crown at the top. It reinforces dispossession and ongoing cultural destruction.

Despite the self-limiting nature of the current draft, the Waterways Road Map is and should be considered as an opportunity for Restorative Justice for Traditional Owners, Proactive Reconciliation for all Victorians and Traditional Owners, and a mitigation plan for climate change.

Final comments, thoughts and recommendations

Whilst the Monarchy (The Crown) is the oldest form of government in the United Kingdom, it is not the case within the unceded territories of the various respective peoples that now make up the Eastern Maar.

With one thousand years of history in the United Kingdom, the Crown's story begins on the lands and waters of what is now known as Australia, only as recently as 1770 with the "planting of the Union Jack" by Captain James Cook on an offshore island. This is despite the many peoples of this land and water each possessing their own forms of government for as many as 60,000 years. This false assertion of rights to govern over these lands and waters of these sovereign peoples were created illegally, immorally and executed with indiscriminate violence upon the original peoples of the lands and waters.

It is understood that the Crown has a less formal role as 'Head of Nation' as in the past. The Crown is recognised by its subjects as the "Sovereign" and reportedly acts as a focus for so-called national identity, unity, and pride. Its role is to give a sense of stability and continuity; officially recognising success and excellence through its various awards; and supports the ideal of voluntary service.

With these roles in mind, The Eastern Maar calls for the Crown to remove the barriers instilled by its institutions that marginalise our Citizens from a society which has built a national identity, unity, and pride on the genocide of the Eastern Maar. To recognise our full and unhindered inclusion in the decision-making processes as a mechanism of broader stability and continuity in the face of climate change. To officially recognise the success and excellence of Eastern Maar, not in tokenistic accolades: but, in full recognition of rights. And lastly, we invite the Crown to volunteer its resources to end the campaign the Crown and its agents conduct against all indigenous peoples within its claimed reign here and around the world.

On a local level, the Eastern Maar remain optimistic in the opportunity we present to the Crown, its governments, and the broader community, to build meaningful relationships with us and to work together in the interests of all parties to futureproof the habitability of our Ancestral Territory beginning now and into the future.