

# Media Release

**The Hon Martin Pakula MP**

Attorney-General

Minister for Racing



Thursday, 2 November, 2017

## **NEGOTIATIONS WITH EASTERN MAAR TRADITIONAL OWNERS TO START**

The Andrews Labor Government and the Eastern Maar Traditional Owner group have agreed to commence negotiations to formally recognise Eastern Maar Traditional Owner rights over Crown land in southwest Victoria.

The negotiation area stretches from Port Fairy to the Great Ocean Road and up to Beaufort and Ararat, taking in Warrnambool, the Shipwreck Coast and the Otways.

The Labor Government and the Eastern Maar will now work towards reaching a settlement under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010*.

The negotiations will include recognition of the Eastern Maar people's right to access, own and manage public land as well as take and participate in the management of natural resources.

Victoria's *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* was introduced as an alternative to pursuing costly and drawn-out litigation under the Commonwealth *Native Title Act*.

It allows for out-of-court settlements recognising the rights of Victorian Traditional Owners and is the only state legislation of its kind.

The Eastern Maar People already have a registered native title claim giving them the immediate right to negotiate with developers about activities that might impact their claimed rights and interests.

The Labor Government is supporting Aboriginal Victorians to pursue self-determination and to design solutions to achieve cultural, economic and social outcomes. The Government has previously reached Traditional Owner settlements with the Dja Dja Wurrung and Gunaikurnai peoples.

### **Quotes attributable to Attorney-General Martin Pakula**

*"The Andrews Labor Government is working to restore the rightful standing of Victoria's first peoples through self-determination and treaty, and we're pleased to enter into negotiations with the Eastern Maar."*

*"These negotiations represent a commitment to acknowledging Traditional Owners and their enduring relationships to country."*

### **Quote attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Natalie Hutchins**

*"This is a fantastic step forward and it is great to see Aboriginal Victorians placed at the centre of the decision making process."*

### **Quotes attributable to Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation CEO Jamie Lowe**

*"The fight for recognition for Eastern Maar citizens has been a long journey and I would like to acknowledge the tireless work put in by our Elders and community to date."*

*"The State's decision to negotiate with us is an acknowledgement that we are the Traditional Owners for our Country. We are committed to a quick resolution to these talks and will continue to build strong and respectful relationships with all stakeholders on Eastern Maar Country."*

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