



Native Title Services Victoria Ltd

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MEDIA RELEASE: The Gunditjmara and Eastern Maar peoples' native title is recognised

Embargoed to 12pm, Wednesday 27 July 2011

The Gunditjmara and Eastern Maar peoples have today been recognised as the native title holders for an area of their traditional country in south-west Victoria.

At a special sitting of the Federal Court of Australia today, Justice North made orders recognising the ongoing native title rights of the Gunditjmara and Eastern Maar peoples. The orders were made by consent of all parties, including the State and Commonwealth.

The determination was marked by celebrations and speeches. Guests were welcomed to traditional country by elders, and with a smoking ceremony and traditional dancing. The Gunditjmara and Eastern Maar people also presented a message stick to the Victorian Attorney-General, the Honourable Robert Clark MP, to mark the occasion and to symbolise the importance of an ongoing positive relationship with the government.

The determination was handed down at Yambuk Coastal Reserve, an area of the coast close to Deen Maar Island (Lady Julia Percy island). Deen Maar Island is a site of immense cultural significance for the Gunditjmara and Eastern Maar people. The area in which native title has been recognised in the determination is in south-west Victoria, along the Shaw and Eumeralla rivers and from Yambuk in the south to beyond Lake Linlithgow in the north.

For the Gunditjmara people, today's determination is the resolution of their native title applications, lodged first in 1996. The native title of the Gunditjmara people was recognised over most of their application area at Mt Eccles (Budj Bim) National Park in March 2007.

For the Eastern Maar people, today's determination is the first recognition of their native title rights.

"Today is a very significant day for the Gunditjmara and Eastern Maar peoples" Graham Atkinson, the Chairperson of NTSV, said.

"For the Gunditjmara people, the determination is the final resolution of their native title claims, and yet another step in their long road to land justice as Traditional Owners. For the Eastern Maar people, the determination is the first time they have been recognised as native title holders, and a very significant step along the path to achieving recognition and respect."

Mr Atkinson also said that today is also an important day for traditional owners in Victoria: “Today is the first time that two groups of native title holders have been recognised in Victoria. It represents what can be achieved when Traditional Owners work together”.

“Today is the first recognition of native title by the present government. Victorian Traditional Owners welcome today’s outcome, and look forward to continuing to work with the government to achieve greater land justice across Victoria.” Mr Atkinson said.

For further information, please see the attached Fact Sheet.

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