

River Red Gum Forests Investigation

INFORMATION SHEET

Indigenous involvement in public land management

Most Victorians acknowledge the spiritual relationship of Aboriginal people with their traditional Country and that public land management should recognise and respect this relationship.

VEAC is recommending significant changes to the way that Aboriginal Traditional Owners may increase their involvement in public land management and decision-making. These changes were brought forward through consultations with Aboriginal people and the wider community. They include:

- Co-management*¹ of the new Barmah National Park and the Nyah–Vinifera Park through Boards of Management with majority Aboriginal membership.
- Aboriginal Advisory Committees for west Wallpolla Island area of Murray-Sunset National Park, Hattah–Kulkyne National Park/Murray-Kulkyne Park, Gunbower National Park, and Bumbang Island Historic and Cultural Features Reserve.
- Ensuring clear provisions for Aboriginal traditional cultural practice such as hunting (including using licensed firearms), gathering, collecting, fishing, collecting earth materials and use of fire. Traditional cultural practice is one of the key ways that Aboriginal people can keep their culture alive and teach younger generations.
- Legislation within five years to enable co-management of national parks and a legal framework for future joint management² or handback/ leaseback of national or other parks.
- Adequate resources for identification and registration of Traditional Owner groups and support for increased involvement in public land management including capacity building, training, group decision making and administrative support.
- Opportunities for increased employment and training for local Aboriginal people, particularly for new parks and reserves in the River Red Gum Forests Investigation area.

These recommendations will enable Victoria to provide for direct Aboriginal participation in land management, similar to that in most other states and territories.

¹ **Co-management (of a park or other area of public land).** Land management issues and decisions between Aboriginal groups and government are shared to varying extents in accordance with a formal co-management agreement. Management decisions are made through a board or committee of management comprising a majority of Aboriginal Traditional Owner group/s representatives.

² **Joint Management (of a park or other area of public land).** Also known as hand back/lease back, applies where the land title is transferred to an Aboriginal group/s and then leased back to the state for a specified period as a park or reserve. The ongoing role that Aboriginal people have in management of the park or area is decided as part of an agreement forming the basis for the lease and any associated settlement.