

Traditional Owners Caring for Country

FACT SHEET

WHAT IS A RAP?

As representative and inclusive Traditional Owner corporations, registered Aboriginal parties (RAPs) have the authority to speak on behalf of all Traditional Owners of their Country. Through the process of registration by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council, their knowledge, lore, cultural responsibilities, and authority has been shown. Their registration as a RAP confirms their inherited and fundamental role to speak for Country and Culture within their registration area.

With some responsibilities as statutory functions under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*, as the proponent of an activity affecting land you are required by law to consult with them. In other instances, you should consult with RAPs as a representative corporation, inclusive of all Traditional Owners of an identified Country. It is appropriate that you work with them as they have gone through a process of rigorous review, in which their relationship to Country, the inclusivity of their membership and relationship to Apical Ancestors have been considered. In these instances of respectful consultation, the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council is seeking to have these responsibilities of a RAP set out in legislation.

ARE THERE TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF COUNTRY WHO ARE NOT MEMBERS OF THE RAP?

Whilst RAPs have inclusive and representative membership structures, an individual Traditional Owner can choose to become, or not to become, a member of the corporation. As cultural responsibility is a collective right, an individuals' family group, Cultural responsibilities and Country are still protected and represented by the RAP, regardless of their membership.

Continued engagement with non-representative groups undermines the capacity for self-determination of formally recognised and inclusive Traditional Owner organisations. The Council supports these recognised organisations to speak collectively for their community and Country.



As custodians of the oldest living Culture on earth, our People have an ancient lineal connection to Country, to Culture and to each other. As Traditional Owners we have both inherited and we create Cultural Heritage. We create artefacts and materials, live traditions and spirituality, and imbed it all within the landscape. That is our Culture. That is why all Country is sacred.

We must work together, talk together, discuss Culture together to find a collective way forward. Not recognising due process clouds the importance of the acknowledgement of recognised Traditional Owners and what they undertook to participate in these processes. The challenge for us all is to understand that the right thing has happened and that, through the process, the voice of First Peoples' has been recognised."

RODNEY CARTER, CHAIRPERSON

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