



VICTORIAN
ABORIGINAL
HERITAGE
COUNCIL



ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND

Grant Program Guidelines

FOREWORD



RUSSELL MULLETT
Chairperson

The Council is exceptionally pleased to invite grant applications from Victorian Traditional Owners to access the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Fund. This investment into managing and protecting Victoria's rich Aboriginal cultural heritage will help preserve our Ancestors' legacy, for the enrichment of the wider community, and for generations to come.

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Fund was established in 2016, following amendments to the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006*. Since this time, Council has worked hard to assume management of the Fund, as envisaged through the changes to the legislation. While on Djaara Country in 2024, and standing beside the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, I announced that Council had achieved this important milestone. This arrangement is underpinned by a memorandum of understanding with the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Fund is a secure source of funding for protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage in Victoria. It is designed to ensure that money received under the legislative framework is channelled back into Victoria's cultural heritage system.

Council has now developed grant funding pathways for Victorian Traditional Owners to access this Fund for its intended purpose. As the primary knowledge-holders and guardians of cultural heritage in this State, grants from the Fund will elevate Traditional Owner led projects that keep our People thriving. The Fund will also help to tackle the complex challenges that community face in preserving our cultural heritage.

Council is committed to empowering our People in the management and protection of their cultural heritage, and we look forward to working together with Traditional Owners across the State to keep our Culture alive and strong.



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Front Cover: Ash Thomas (Yorta Yorta/Wiradjuri) ‘A New World’ 2022, acrylic on canvas

This painting is about the beauty my Ancestors saw when their world first saw light – just one of the beautiful things our mother spirit has given us along with our beautiful Country that is full of culture and stories passed down through the years’ - A Thomas

1. WHAT IS THE ABORIGINAL CULTURAL HERITAGE FUND?

The Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Fund (Fund) is established under Part 10A of the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (the Act).

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (Council) manages the Fund. Any fees paid under the Act are paid into the Fund, as well as any other money borrowed or received by the Council (including funding from the Victorian Government).

Grants can be made out of the Fund for the purposes of protecting or managing cultural heritage. Grants of up to \$250,000 (including GST) are available to eligible applicants.

Grants may be used to support the protection of cultural heritage, inclusive of cultural heritage landscapes, sacred places, and Ancestral burial grounds.

Applications for grants are made to the Council, who will review and recommend projects for funding. Council is committed to empowering Victoria's Traditional Owners to continue to care for their cultural heritage and leave a rich legacy and inheritance for future generations.



2. PURPOSE OF THESE GRANT GUIDELINES

These Guidelines provide details about the application process and the criteria for making grants out of the Fund, including:

- who can apply for grant funding;
- what type of projects can receive grant funding;
- what information needs to be included in the application; and
- how applications are assessed.

Terms used in these Guidelines have the same meaning given in the Act.

Applicants needing assistance with the application process can contact the Office of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council at vahc@dpc.vic.gov.au or 03 9922 7002.

3. WHO CAN APPLY?

In order for an application for funding to be considered, the organisation applying for the grant must:

- be controlled, led or directed by Victorian Traditional Owners;
- possess an Australian Business Number (ABN);
- be registered for the Goods and Services Tax (GST) (or GST exempt, for organisations seeking funding below \$150,000);
- be financially solvent; and
- be incorporated and/or registered with the Office of the Registrar of Indigenous Corporations (ORIC), or the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (ASIC), or Consumer Affairs Victoria (CAV), or through an Act of Parliament.

An auspice organisation may make a grant application on behalf of an unincorporated Traditional Owner group/s or community.

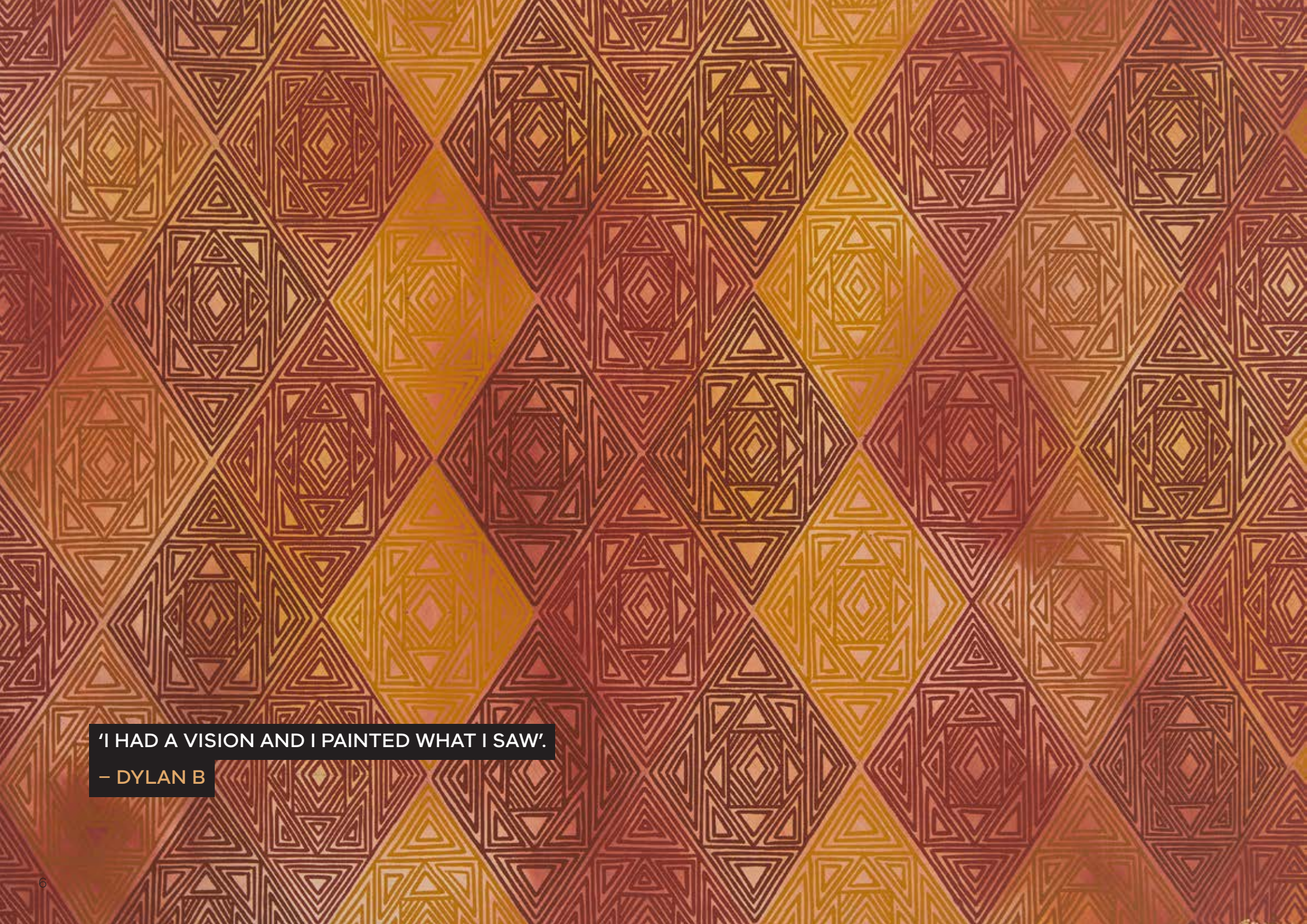
The auspice organisation must:

- possess an ABN;
- be registered for GST;
- be financially solvent;
- be incorporated and/or registered with either CAV, ORIC, ASIC, or through an Act of Parliament.

The auspice organisation must demonstrate that the application has been developed by and on behalf of a Traditional Owner group/s or community. Traditional Owner support for the application may be demonstrated through the following:

- the auspice is an Aboriginal community controlled organisation and/or is majority owned by Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people.
- memorandums of understanding, partnership agreements, engagement plans, or appropriate governance/business records that demonstrate that the application is for the sole benefit of a Traditional Owner group/s or community.
- letters of support that demonstrate a genuine and ongoing partnership with the Traditional Owner group/s or community.





'I HAD A VISION AND I PAINTED WHAT I SAW.'

– DYLAN B

3. WHO CAN APPLY? CONT'D

Where the project is in a Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) area:

In addition to the above requirements under section 3, applicants seeking grant funding for a place-based project based within a **RAP area** must either:

- be the appointed RAP for the application area; or
- have a letter of recommendation from the RAP supporting the application.

Where the project is outside a RAP area:

In addition to the above requirements under section 3, applicants seeking funding for a place-based project in non-RAP areas should be representative of relevant Traditional Owner Group/s or community or have written support from relevant Traditional Owner Group/s or community.

It is important to note that grant funding awarded for projects in non-RAP areas does not constitute formal recognition of Traditional Ownership of that area of Country. Formal recognition of Traditional Ownership by Council is done by way of the appointment of RAPs under the Act. Please contact the Council if you seek more information about the RAP application process under Victorian legislation.

4. WHO CANNOT APPLY?

Funding is not generally granted for applicants that fall within one of the following categories:

- individuals (individuals must be represented by an applicable organisation or auspice organisation);
- organisations in liquidation;
- organisations without demonstrative Traditional Owner support;
- organisations that are not registered and compliant with ORIC, CATSI, ASIC or other legislation; and
- organisations that, at the time of the application, have existing grants from the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC) and have not complied with requirements under the relevant funding agreement.

'LAKE DIREL, MY GRANDFATHER'S
COUNTRY, FROM THE AIR'

— R WIRRAMANDA



5. WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS CAN BE FUNDED?

In accordance with the Act, grant funding must be made for the purposes of **'protecting and managing Aboriginal cultural heritage'**. The Act defines 'Aboriginal cultural heritage' as Aboriginal places, Aboriginal objects and Aboriginal Ancestral Remains.

Grant funding is available under three categories:

Grants up to the amount specified will be made out of the Fund in relation to three categories, as set out below.

Category 1: Cultural heritage protection works
(up to \$250,000 plus GST)

Funding to support applicants to undertake works to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage.

This funding might be used to:

- undertake land management works to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage at risk of imminent harm with no intervention.
- undertake land management works to maintain and protect cultural heritage.
- keep and care for Aboriginal objects, artefacts and Ancestral Remains.

Category 2: Innovation, excellence and advocacy in cultural heritage management
(up to \$50,000 plus GST)

Funding to support initiatives and programs for the management of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

This funding might be used for:

- Building an IT system to manage internal cultural heritage management matters.
- Traditional Owner advocacy such as conducting research or preparing reports, submissions and other material in support of improvements to Victoria's Aboriginal cultural heritage system.
- Initiatives to promote gender equity, women's business, and to raise the profile of Aboriginal women in the cultural heritage sector.

Category 3: Awareness or training initiatives (up to \$25,000 plus GST)

Funding to support applicants to undertake cultural heritage awareness or training initiatives for the purpose of enhancing cultural heritage management and protection.

This funding might be used to:

- Create products (such as documentaries, interactive websites, immersive experiences, virtual environments or digital twins of cultural heritage places, values or landscapes) that preserve or share the benefits of cultural heritage in a Victorian context.

6. WHAT IF MY PROJECT DOES NOT FIT UNDER THE FUNDING CATEGORIES?

Please contact the Office of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council at vahc@dpc.vic.gov.au if you are interested in grant funding under the Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Fund, for cultural heritage management and protection, and you are unsure if your project falls within these grant funding categories.

Council is interested in hearing from Victorian Traditional Owners about how grant funding opportunities might adapt and evolve over time to best meet your cultural heritage needs and aspirations. We may also be able to direct you towards other fit-for-purpose funding pathways.

7. WHAT TYPES OF PROJECTS CANNOT BE FUNDED?

Grant funding will generally not be granted for the following activities:

- business as usual costs of the organisation (noting that applications can include elements of human resourcing to support projects e.g. bringing a skilled individual into the organisation to assist with the project);
- activities that a Victorian Government department or agency is responsible for funding (with the exception of the Ancestral Remains Repatriation Fund);
- RAP operational costs and core staffing (these funding inquiries should be directed to First Peoples–State Relations within DPC).
- a future stage of a project where the previous stage/s is not complete;
- activities without demonstrative Traditional Owner support;
- activities without the support of the land owner or land manager, where relevant; and
- land use activities without the necessary legal/regulatory approvals, where relevant.
- high value land acquisition and infrastructure projects are beyond scope.

8. HOW DO I APPLY?

Applicants should contact the Office of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council at vahc@dpc.vic.gov.au to discuss their project proposal prior to making a submission.

Applicants must complete the application form and attach all supporting material. The application form is available at Council's website: www.aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au. Applications will be considered against the eligibility criteria and the assessment criteria in these Guidelines.

Email vahc@dpc.vic.gov.au or call 03 9922 7002 if you want help with your application.



'IN THE EVENING I WALK IN THE YARD WITH MY
SISTER GIRL ... IT'S A TIME FOR REFLECTION'.

– S EDWARDS

9. WHAT TYPES OF MATERIAL DOES AN ORGANISATION NEED TO SUBMIT WITH ITS APPLICATION?

Applications will be assessed against the criteria set out below. The same criteria will be applied across all funding categories, however, the level of detail provided in the application should be commensurate with the value of the project. All relevant supporting documentation must be submitted together with the application to be considered by Council.

Why: Applications must clearly demonstrate why the project is needed. Applications should include a clear rationale for the project and how the project will assist with the management and protection of Aboriginal cultural heritage.

What: Applications must clearly articulate what works or actions will be undertaken and how these improvements will deliver outcomes (in particular, outcomes relevant to managing and protecting Aboriginal cultural heritage). If applicable, details of additional funding or in-kind contributions from stakeholders/partners should be provided.

Who: Applications must clearly articulate how Victorian Traditional Owners will benefit from the project and be supported by relevant data or information.

How: Applications must describe how the project will be delivered including key steps, an overview of the project timeline, details about who will oversee and manage the project, and the governance structure for decision-making, approvals and managing contracts and payments.



Supporting material:

Should any of the below information not be provided by the applicant, the application may be considered incomplete and may not be considered by Council until the information is received.

Essential

- Budget breakdown of anticipated income and expenditure. If seeking funding for a project with multiple sites, a breakdown of costs for each site is required. Where appropriate, escalation should be applied to cost estimates.
- Details of any confirmed cash funding or in-kind contributions, or information about confirmed and unconfirmed funding sources, if applicable.
- Letter of support from both parties (e.g. the person or body leading the funding

project and the auspice organisation) if an auspice arrangement is in place.

- Where the project is within a RAP area, and the applicant is not the RAP, a letter of recommendation from the RAP.
- Where the project is outside a RAP area, a letter of support from the Traditional Owner group/s or community supporting the application.
- Applications must provide current quotes/cost estimates (no older than 90 days) for all proposed works.

Essential

For Category 1 projects:

- Evidence of owning any project site or having the right to undertake the funding activity on the project site (e.g. certificates of title, tenancy agreements, or legislated rights of use).
- Evidence that private landowners and/or public land managers approve the funding activity (and any legal or regulatory approvals have been met).
- Photos and detailed maps of the site where the project will take place, if applicable.

Desirable

For all Category projects:

- Project delivery plan, a project timeline, Gantt chart, or a scope of works document.

- Overview of any governance arrangements and strategic plans to demonstrate the priority of the project to the applicant and/or its project partners.

- Letters of support from partner organisations or key stakeholders.



'THIS REPRESENTS MY COUNTRY AND LIFE JOURNEY
– WITH MANY DIFFICULT PATHWAYS TO CHOOSE FROM.
THE ECHO LINE WORK REPRESENTS MY MEMORY
AND EXPERIENCES'.
– STEPHEN N

10. ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Applicants should contact the Office of the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council (Office) at vahec@dpc.vic.gov.au to discuss their project proposal prior to making an application.

Applicants must complete the application form and attach all supporting material. The application form is available at Council's website: www.aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au.

On receipt of an application, the Office will undertake a preliminary analysis of the information provided to ensure alignment with these Guidelines.

The Office may engage with the applicant at this time, to ensure the application has been fully completed.

Council will then undertake a thorough review and analysis of the application and work with DPC to ensure the application meets the eligibility criteria in these Guidelines and aligns with the Fund's purpose under the Act.

Following the conclusion of this process, the Council may make a recommendation to DPC's Secretary that they make a grant payment out of the Fund

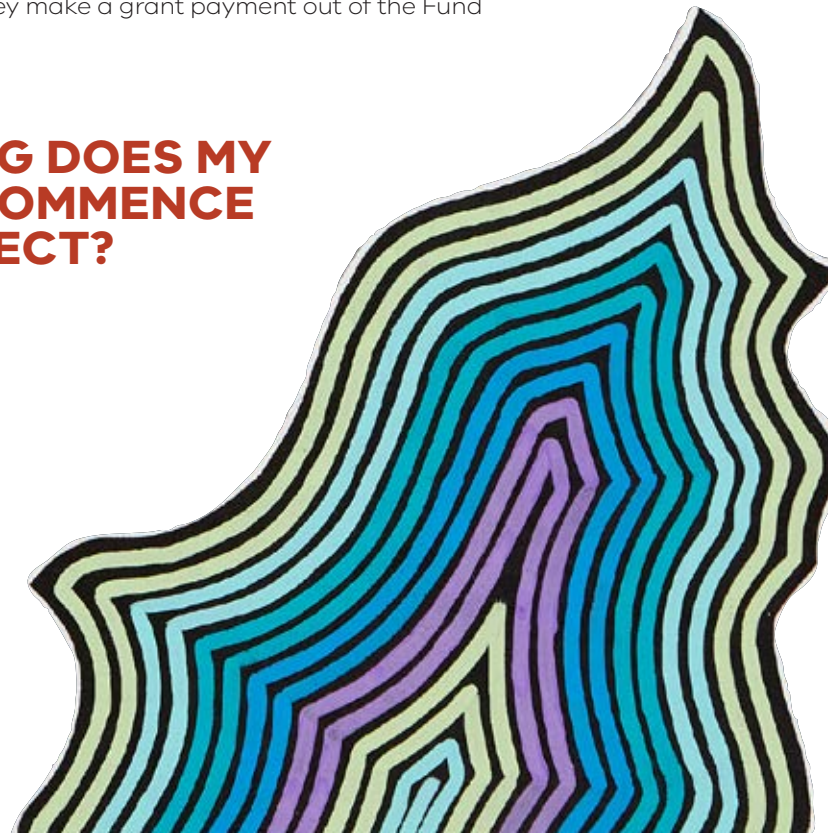
under section 158D(1)(c) of the Act. The Office will engage with the applicant to advise on the outcome of the application.

If a decision is made to award funding to the applicant, the applicant will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the Victorian Government using the Victorian Common Funding Agreement. The funding agreement establishes the parties' responsibilities, the funding terms and conditions, and reporting requirements.

11. IF SUCCESSFUL, HOW LONG DOES MY ORGANISATION HAVE TO COMMENCE AND COMPLETE THE PROJECT?

All projects must be commenced within six months of the funding agreement being executed and be completed within twenty-four months from commencement, unless otherwise specified in the agreement.

Variations to these timelines can only be considered if the request for variation is received in writing from the successful applicant and is agreed to by DPC.



12. FUNDING CONDITIONS

Applicants can only apply for grant funding when funding rounds are open

Grant funding is discretionary

The assessment of any application for funding, and funding recommendations, are made by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council in its absolute discretion. The decision to award funding is a decision for the Victorian Government in its absolute discretion. All decisions in relation to grants are final.

In particular:

- an application may be considered ineligible if it is incomplete, not reasonably able to be understood or not compliant with these Guidelines
- applicants may be asked to confirm or expand on details in their application
- applying for funding does not guarantee funding or the full amount of funding requested
- funding decisions and conditions are not negotiable
- these Guidelines may be amended from time to time.

The Council and the State is not liable

The Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council and the Victorian Government are not liable for actions or claims in relation to grant funding, any loss or damage that might arise in relation to grant funding, and any personal injury in relation to grant funding.

No binding agreement

No binding agreement to provide grant funding exists until both parties have signed the funding agreement. Administrative costs incurred in the lead up to both parties signing a funding agreement are not claimable.

In-kind and other sources of funding

Applicants should clearly identify funding their organisation will contribute as well as money received or likely to be received from third parties (including government agencies).

Funding agreements

Successful applicants will be required to enter into a funding agreement with the Victorian Government using the Victorian Common Funding Agreement. The funding agreement establishes the parties and their responsibilities, and the funding terms and conditions, including milestones.

Successful applicants must report on funding, as outlined in the funding agreement.

Project delivery

Organisations that receive funding are responsible for project delivery against the agreed project timeline, milestones and budget (contained within the Victorian Common Funding Agreement). If project delivery is unreasonably delayed or substantially changed, DPC reserves the right to cancel the funding agreement and recover unspent funds. The Victorian Common Funding Agreement can be varied should extenuating circumstances arise. This must be done in agreement with both Council and DPC.

Project Completion Report

A Project Completion Report must be completed once the project has ended. A draft template will be provided to assist meet this milestone.

The report should provide details of the project's completion, and the project's outcomes. Where your organisation has an auspice, the authorised contact officer from that organisation will be required to sign the expenditure statement.

No guarantee of future funds

Securing funding through this Fund does not guarantee future funding through this Fund or any other administered by the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council or Victorian Government.

Funding Agreements do not constitute Traditional Owner recognition

It is important to note that grant funding awarded for projects in non-RAP areas is not a form of Traditional Owner recognition, noting the Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council's distinct legislative responsibility for appointing RAPs under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic).

13. PRIVACY

Information in the funding application is used to determine eligibility and suitability for funds. Personal information will be handled in accordance with the *Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014* and other applicable laws.

The Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner provides useful resources for understanding the privacy framework, which you may read here:

<https://ovic.vic.gov.au/>

www.aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au

