

Questions taken on notice and further information agreed to be supplied at the hearings

Portfolio	PREMIER
Witness	Mr MERLINO
Committee member	Mr HIBBINS
Page of transcript	21

Question:

Mr HIBBINS: In terms of another initiative on budget paper 3, page 3, ‘An advanced Aboriginal cultural heritage protection system for a growing economy’, I ask whether any of the \$14.2 million funding over the next two years will go towards restoring—you would be well aware of the destruction of the sacred eel, which is of significance to the Djab Wurrung people, of significant heritage status to them—that site and returning it to the traditional owners and protecting that and other similar sites that face similar risks?

Mr MERLINO: Thanks, Mr Hibbins, for your question. I can outline for the committee what this funding is earmarked for: \$3 million to continue to employ Aboriginal heritage officers to lead compliance and enforcement in registered Aboriginal parties; \$9.4 million over two years to deliver nation building, particularly in areas without formally recognised groups; and \$1.8 million for the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations. **I am happy to take on notice if there is any support directly to the matter that you have raised.**

Mr HIBBINS: Okay, thank you.

Answer:

As outlined in my initial response to you on this matter, the 2021/2022 State Budget invests \$9.4 million in Nation-building. Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation is eligible to receive \$250,000 flexible funding to support its nation-building efforts, which can extend to cultural heritage management and protection priorities.

Regarding the Kooyang Ceremonial Ground specifically, we have not presumed through a budget allocation the most appropriate next steps to restore and best protect this significant Aboriginal place. As with so many decisions in Aboriginal Affairs, we are committed to Aboriginal self-determination and will be guided by the Traditional Owners in developing measures for the ongoing protection and management of this significant Aboriginal place.

My department is working closely with the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, the formally recognised Traditional Owner corporation for the area, on options to restore and best protect the Kooyang Ceremonial Ground. Until Eastern Maar has considered restoration options, it is not appropriate for government to act.

To assist Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation to determine appropriate management and protection measures, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs is considering making an Ongoing Protection Declaration for the Kooyang Ceremonial Ground.

An Ongoing Protection Declaration would provide permanent management conditions governing protection, access and use of this Aboriginal place into the future. As a first step, my department will prepare a conservation management plan for the Kooyang Ceremonial Ground. The conservation management plan will be developed with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and the landowners. It will inform the proposed Ongoing Protection Declaration by documenting the Aboriginal cultural heritage significance of Kooyang Ceremonial Ground and determining the measures required for its protection.

Victoria's Aboriginal cultural heritage is integral to our State, our history and identity. Any unauthorised damage to Aboriginal cultural heritage is reprehensible. I am confident that the department is well placed and resourced to support Eastern Marr Aboriginal Corporation once it has determined the most appropriate course of action to restore and best protect the Kooyang Ceremonial Ground.

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Witness	Mr MERLINO
Committee member	Mr LIMBRICK
Page of transcript	12–13

Question:

Mr LIMBRICK: With the behavioural insights team, what sort of insights are you actually getting? This was to do with behaviours and coronavirus, but it is not clear to me what sort of behavioural insights are actually being developed. Is this something that you can provide some guidance on?

...

Mr MOULE: Mr Limbrick, I think you asked me a similar question when I appeared last. **I am happy to provide you with some information on notice, given the time.**

Mr LIMBRICK: We might have to do it on notice.

Answer:

The Behavioural Insights Unit provides vital behavioural science expertise to the Victorian Government. This advice helps to optimise policies that support government engagement with Victorians and COVID-19 recovery activities. The Behavioural Insights Unit works collaboratively with teams across the public sector to improve outcomes for Victorians using approaches informed by behavioural science.

The Behavioural Insights Unit applies insights from behavioural science to encourage behaviours that support the government’s policy objectives. In the context of responses to COVID-19 in Victoria, this has included advice to help support COVIDSafe behaviours. Behaviours like mask wearing, checking in and getting tested are critical to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and managing the response. The Behavioural Insights Unit has provided advice based on international behavioural science evidence to help make COVIDSafe behaviours easier for people to adopt.