28 August 2019

Andrews government set to destroy sacred Djab Wurrung trees

Dear Hon Daniel Andrews MP,

The Andrews government is set to cut down sacred Djab Wurrung trees and destroy surrounding sacred land.

The Djab Wurrung people have been the Traditional Owners of their Country for thousands of years. The state of Victoria should respect their sacred lands.

ANTaR Victoria does not support the removal of the Traditional Owners of the land, the Djab Wurrung people, from their sacred land. We support the sovereignty of the Djab Wurrung people over their land and acknowledge their deep understanding and respect for their land and culture.

The Djab Wurrung people have consistently expressed the need to protect these sacred trees and the surrounding land since Major Road Projects Victoria announced the expansion of the western highway. As the Traditional Owners, their wishes should be honoured.

The Djab Wurrung tree embassy was established in 2018 to stand up for the rights of the Djab Wurrung people to protect their land from the threat of destruction from Major Road Projects Victoria. Many Aboriginal and non-aboriginal people have supported these wishes, yet the state government has continued to disregard the voices of the Traditional Owners.

Evicting the Djab Wurrung embassy from Djab Wurrung Country displays the lack of consideration, or desire to understand, the significance of this site to the Djab Wurrung people.
Aboriginal people have lived on the lands we now occupy for thousands of years. In that time they have continued to care for the land.

The Victorian government is continuing practices of implementing culturally destructive policies. This follows on from 200 years of colonisation.

Once a piece of cultural history is lost it cannot be recovered. This has been seen with many sacred sites around the state.

In 2019 we should be looking to a future where Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Australians can live respectfully towards one another.

Victoria is now in the process of establishing a Treaty with Aboriginal Victorians. This is inconsistent with removing the Djab Wurrung people from their sacred Country.

The continuation of the Western Highway on sacred land is a direct attack on the Djab Wurrung people.

On behalf of ANTaR Victoria,

Brigid Knight Braniff
Co-Chairperson, ANTaR Victoria