

**OPEN LETTER TO CULTURAL HERITAGE ADVISORS –  
CONSULTATION WHEN PREPARING A CULTURAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT PLAN**

This letter provides advice about consulting with Aboriginal bodies when a sponsor is preparing a cultural heritage management plan (CHMP) under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (the Act). This advice is non-binding.

Cultural heritage advisors should involve appropriate Aboriginal people in cultural heritage assessments because this accords proper status in determining cultural heritage management outcomes to Aboriginal people with a particular knowledge about the cultural heritage of an area.

Consultation also facilitates the appropriate assessment of the cultural significance of Aboriginal places and objects, and is consistent with the Act's objectives. The Act establishes Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) as the appropriate bodies with such knowledge. In areas where a RAP has been appointed, consultation should be with this organisation.

Where there is no relevant RAP, I provide the following guidance:

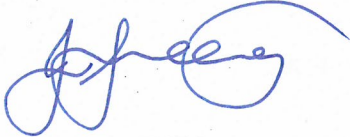
- The fact that an Aboriginal body has applied, or will apply, to become a RAP does not necessarily mean it is a relevant body to consult with in relation to the preparation of a CHMP. This fact also does not affect the consideration of the Secretary in determining the Aboriginal persons or bodies considered relevant to a CHMP application.
- Consultation is for the purpose of obtaining an adequate assessment of the existence and significance of Aboriginal cultural heritage. Traditional Owner groups, inclusively representing individual Traditional Owners, are more likely to be the relevant bodies with which to consult in preparing a CHMP. Sponsors should endeavour to consult accordingly.
- The scope and terms of consultation with relevant Traditional Owners in non-RAP areas is entirely a matter for the Sponsor.

Commencing with a shared understanding of the consultation required, and following a considered consultation plan can provide more certainty to all parties, and may avoid unexpected delays or further assessment being required on evaluation of a CHMP.

Further information on Aboriginal cultural heritage issues in Victoria is available at the Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria's web site ([www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au](http://www.aboriginalaffairs.vic.gov.au)).

Any enquiries about this matter should be directed to Dr Mark Eccleston, Manager Heritage Operations, on (telephone) 03 9208 3281.

Yours sincerely



**JANE SWEENEY**  
**Director, Heritage Services**  
**Office of Aboriginal Affairs Victoria**

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