

Media Release

Ms Mary-Anne Thomas MP
Minister for Regional Development
Minister for Agriculture



Wednesday, 3 November 2021

NATIVE FOODS BUSINESS BLOSSOMING IN THE MALLEE

The Andrews Labor Government is backing Aboriginal Victorian-owned businesses to nurture an authentic and vibrant native foods industry, restoring the rights of Traditional Owners.

Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the Belar Nursery and Bioculture Resources Centre to announce the Labor Government's \$2 million Djakitjuk Djanga Program in partnership with the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations.

The Government is focusing on growing emerging industries as well as restoring the rights of Traditional Owners through programs like the Djakitjuk Djanga Native Foods and Botanicals. This program translates to "Country's Food" in Dja Dja Wurrung language.

Belar nursery has received \$135,000 in funding through the program to employ an additional staff member and purchase new equipment for the site.

The project is part of *First People's Environment and Ecosystem Restoration Initiative*, which is working with farmers and other land managers to facilitate large-scale native plantings to regenerate natural habitats as well as commercial farming landscapes.

The Djakitjuk Djanga Program has supported 13 Aboriginal native plant businesses to overcome key resource-related barriers towards the commercial production of native foods and botanicals.

First People of the Millewa-Mallee also received funding from the Labor Government's *Creating Jobs and Supporting Economic Recovery for Aboriginal Victorians Program* to boost their nursery, native seedbank and seed production enterprise, as well as employ a further seven staff in the nursery and engage a consultant.

Earlier this year, Traditional Owners launched their Native Food and Botanicals Strategy. The strategy is an Australian first which lays out a plan to create a strong, authentic, sustainable bushfood sector that will restore the rights of Traditional Owners.

The Labor Government is working to maximize the growth potential of key emerging industries including native foods through its Agriculture strategy, to grow the value and output for the sector.

For more information on the Djakitjuk Djanga Program grant recipients, visit agriculture.vic.gov.au.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Agriculture Mary-Anne Thomas

"We are proud to be supporting the First People of the Millewa-Mallee through the Djakitjuk Djanga Program – we know a Traditional Owner-led native food and botanicals industry will benefit all Victorians."

"It is fantastic to see how the nursery is growing native food and plants for the regeneration of Country, and to hear about how important this is for the communities' cultural connection and identity."