

Media Release

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



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UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE OPENS AS CULTURAL DESTINATION

One of the world's oldest and most important cultural sites will be open to visitors across the state, after major works led by the Gunditjmara Traditional Owners have now been completed.

Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the Budj Bim Cultural Landscape in Southwest Victoria – where visitors can learn how Gunditjmara people worked with the natural resources and environment for more than 30,000 years.

The Andrews Labor Government invested more than \$12 million in the project, which has transformed the area while ensuring the site's cultural heritage is protected and enhanced.

Budj Bim is home to fish traps and weirs used for farming eels as well as the remains of over 300 Aboriginal stone houses – evidence of the Gunditjmara People's permanent settlement in the area.

The entire site will be a destination for locals and visitors to learn about its important cultural history and significance. It features a new eel aquaculture education centre, art installations, raised walkways, a cantilevered lookout, an upgraded information centre, carparks and interpretive signage.

The Budj Bim Cultural Landscape project encompasses five sites including Tyrendarra Township, Kurtonitj, Lake Condah, Tyrendarra Indigenous Protected Area and Budj Bim National Park.

All sites are now complete with official tours of Lake Condah and Kurtonitj to begin in the coming months. The new works follow ongoing consultation with Traditional Owners including the completion of a *Cultural Heritage Management Plan*.

The Labor Government has supported the project through the *Regional Tourism Infrastructure Fund*. The Government also contributed to Budj Bim's successful bid to become a UNESCO World Heritage listed site in 2019, making it the only site to be listed solely for its Aboriginal cultural values.

The Government supported the recently unveiled Gunditjmara War Memorial Mural in Heywood, through the *Stronger Regional Communities* Program to ensure their part in Australia's war history is honoured for generations to come.

The Fund is part of the Government's more than \$30 billion investment in rural and regional Victoria since 2015. For more information go to rdv.vic.gov.au/rjif

Quote attributable to Minister for Regional Development Mary-Anne Thomas

"Budj Bim is historically unique and deserves recognition from all Australians. This cultural landscape will share the history of the Gunditjmara people and become a place for visitors to enjoy for generations to come, while creating more local jobs."

Quote attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gabrielle Williams

"We are prioritising the protection, promotion and celebration of significant Aboriginal cultural heritage across Victoria – and the world heritage listing of Budj Bim is a testament to that."

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Quote attributable to Member for Western Victoria Gayle Tierney

“Visitors can for the first-time experience one of the world’s oldest and most important cultural sites right here in regional Victoria, thanks to a major development project led by the Gunditjmara Traditional Owners.”

Quote attributable to Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation Acting CEO Denis Rose

“The new tourism infrastructure will provide an opportunity to increase the capacity of the local Gunditjmara community to manage nature-based tourism and ensure protection and management of these important cultural places.”