

# Media Release

**Ingrid Stitt MP**

Minister for Early Childhood & Pre-Prep  
Minister for Environment



Monday, 31 July 2023

## PROTECTING DEEN MAAR ISLAND

The Andrews Labor Government is protecting Deen Maar Island from rabbits that threaten to cause damage to First Peoples' spiritual sites and animal habitats.

Located eight kilometres south-west of Port Fairy, the small island is culturally significant to Indigenous Victorians for its role in Bunjil creation stories.

It is also home to the nation's largest breeding colony of Australian Fur Seals, and it is one of Victoria's most important seabird breeding sites, hosting colonies of Short-tailed Shearwaters, Little Penguins and Fairy Prions.

There are no other native mammals or amphibians on Deen Maar, and the White's Skink is the only reptile on the island.

A threat to the successful breeding of native seabird species is the presence of European Rabbits, first introduced in the mid-1800's to provide a food source for potential shipwreck survivors.

Rabbits pose a negative impact on the nesting habitats of seabirds by altering vegetation cover and causing widespread erosion as they forage and burrow.

Reducing rabbit numbers will help improve habitat for seabird nesting on the island, while boosting their long-term breeding success, and strengthening the species' resilience across the state.

The Labor Government in collaboration with Parks Victoria, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation (EMAC) and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation (GMTOAC) will support the project through multiple phases across 2023.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for the Environment Ingrid Stitt

*"Deen Maar has incredible environmental and cultural values and we're honored to partner with Traditional Owners to protect this vital seabird and seal breeding site."*

*"This vital work will ensure Deen Maar Island's precious biodiversity and First Peoples history remains protected for years to come."*

### Quotes attributable to Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

*"Deen Maar Island is a culturally significant site and special place to Eastern Maar and Gunditjmara peoples".*

*"Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Aboriginal Corporation and Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation are project partners of the Deen Maar Island Rabbit Eradication Project. Both Corporations are supportive of the project and are looking forward to the successful eradication of rabbits from this special place."*