

Media Release

The Hon Gavin Jennings MLC
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council
Special Minister of State
Minister for Priority Precincts
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

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**DELIVERING
FOR ALL VICTORIANS**

LOOKING BACK TO PRESERVE ABORIGINAL HISTORY

The Andrews Labor Government is ensuring cultural heritage protection remains in place for an area in south-west Victoria that could potentially trace human life in Australia back 120,000 years – double the widely accepted estimate.

An unusual deposit of shells and burnt stones found at Moyjil, near Warrnambool, is the subject of a 10-year research project that raises the possibility of Aboriginal people having existed in Australia for 120,000 years.

This is 60,000 years longer than the currently accepted timeline of humans in Australia.

The extraordinary research has been published in the latest journal issue of *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Victoria*.

While the study cannot conclusively say the middens are the result of human activity, the researchers are still investigating further specialist techniques that could help resolve the question.

The area at the heart of the study is preserved by way of an Ongoing Protection Declaration enforced by Aboriginal Victoria and covers an area of 1.361 hectares. It protects the area from activities likely to harm by directly people away from culturally sensitive areas.

Moyjil is the Aboriginal name for Point Ritchie, located on the Warrnambool Foreshore Reserve, west of the Hopkins River.

The study has been overseen by the Moyjil Project Committee, comprising of the region's Traditional Owners (Eastern Maar, Gunditj Mirring and Kuuyang Maar) as well as government agencies and researchers from the University of Melbourne, Deakin,

Victoria is leading the country in Aboriginal Cultural Heritage protection, and the Declaration is part of an ongoing commitment to protect and preserve areas of high cultural sensitivity.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gavin Jennings

"This is incredibly exciting research and could pave the way to a whole new understanding of Australian history."

"While the research study continues, we're doing our bit to ensure the cultural heritage of the area is protected."

"Protecting the cultural heritage of thousands of generations of Aboriginal people in Victoria is of the utmost importance."