



Gundiymara and Djap wurrung Elder

The Hon Tanya Plibersek MP
Minister for Environment
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Telephone: (02) 6277 7920

Dear Minister Plibersek,

I am a Gundiymara elder with Djap Wurrung inheritance through Barbara Winter, my Great Great Grandmother.

I am concerned about the Western Highway Project from Buangor to Ararat, on Djap Wurrung land. My sister Sandra and her grandchildren put a lot of time in to protecting the area between 2018 and 2020.

I support the EPBC Application from KORS Inc that requests you protect our area by organising an improved route. It could even be done while we are waiting for a new CHMP.

Plans for the road expansion will destroy many large old trees and will desecrate an area holding our cultural heritage. The area has two living habitation trees and numerous scar trees. A stone tool has been found there. Clay cooking items have also been found there in one of the trees. There is hardly any cultural heritage left in this area so it is very important to us.

We know that our land can be protected by using the current highway and this can be done with much less damage if engineers are told to use their skill for this purpose. At present respect for the land is missing. Please get the road plans improved. Make more use of the existing highway and design as though the earth is precious and vulnerable, not stuff to be pushed aside.

As a descendant of both Barbara Winter and the last great Chief of six clans, King Billy of Lake Condah, I find it absolutely heartbreaking that we are still over-ruled by people who pretend and say they will protect our sites. But they do not protect our sites. They go against the views of Traditional Owners who know about our country and with the stroke of a pen they will take it all away.

These beautiful trees that have given us food, shelter and oxygen for hundreds of years have been repaid with vandalism and sentenced to death along with the animals, birds and insects that make up the ecology of the landscape.

Please listen to these trees and us Traditional Owners if you want to have anything beautiful left for your children's children to see – these very special trees in their own landscape.

Jimmy King Onus
Gunditjmara and Djap Wurrung Elder
Director of Gunditjmara Wungit Aboriginal Corporation
Portland VIC 3305

17 March 2025