

Country Alliance Calls for Review of Indigenous Representation

The Country Alliance Party today called for the Victorian Government to review the 2007 decision by the Aboriginal Heritage Council to grant Registered Aboriginal Party (RAP) status solely to the Yorta Yorta clan.

Party spokesman Russell Bate said that recent issues surrounding the VEAC River Red Gum Forests investigation had highlighted the divisions that this decision was causing within indigenous communities.

“The decision to appoint the Yorta Yorta people as the region's only registered party simply because it has more members than the Bangerang may be convenient but effectively denies the Bangerang and Latji-Latji communities a voice in matters affecting land over which they have at least as strong or stronger traditional ties than the Yorta Yorta.” Mr Bate said.

“As we saw with the VEAC process, the elders of both the Bangerang and Latji Latji communities have held quite different positions to those of the Yorta Yorta and failure to consult with them has meant that these views were not heard” Mr Bate said.

“Clearly these differences in position demonstrate that it is neither possible nor wise to rely on one clan to speak on behalf of another” he added.

“While the current issues are centred on the three Murray River indigenous communities there is no reason to assume that similar issues will not surface in future government reviews of land classification and use elsewhere in Victoria.”

“What the Aboriginal Heritage Council has done is to divide Victoria’s indigenous communities and to create an inequality of representation that would not be accepted by any other of the State’s communities. It is imperative that in future the state acknowledges every indigenous community’s right to be heard and to be consulted equally” he added.

Mr Bate concluded by stating that the Council’s spokesman, Damian Bell, in claiming that the Yorta Yorta was the “most appropriate organisation” to protect the area’s cultural heritage was clearly flawed and demonstrated an ignorance of the place, cultural and historical ties of the Bangerang and Latji Latji to the region.

.For media comment contact Russell Bate

Website: www.countryalliance.org

Admin: admin@countryalliance.org / ph 0425 746 066