

MEDIA RELEASE
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NEW URBAN GARDEN *LAAK BOORNDAP* TO TRANSFORM MELBOURNE ARTS PRECINCT

MELBOURNE, VIC – Today, the Victorian Government released new designs and announced that the 18,000sqm urban garden in the centre of the Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation **will be named Laak Boorndap** (pronounced Lark – Born – Darp).

The name, Laak Boorndap, was bestowed to the garden by **Traditional Owner, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Language Elder, Aunty Gail Smith** to honour the beautiful place that the garden will create for all. The naming of the garden is a key step in grounding visitors on Wurundjeri Country and growing representation of First Peoples cultures across the Arts Precinct.

Aunty Gail Smith says, “it’s not just a placename, it brings Sky Country, the heavens, and everyone back together on sacred ground.”

The garden is designed by the Melbourne studio of international design practice Hassell and New York’s SO-IL, with internationally renowned horticulturalists Nigel Dunnett and James Hitchmough, who are working closely with plant expert Jac Semmler from Melbourne company, Super Bloom. Planted entirely on an elevated deck, this remarkable new public garden is at the forefront of contemporary garden design – being unique in the world in its planting density, scale and climate resiliency.

Taking advantage of the relatively mild winters in Melbourne, the garden has been designed to flourish year-round, ensuring it is beautiful and ever-changing, and continually fostering biodiversity. The garden showcases a highly dynamic and multi-layered planting design using a mix of native and introduced species including carefully selected trees, perennials, grasses and flora. A bold and unique approach to naturalistic planting, visitors will be able to enjoy six different areas of thematic planting within the garden that intersect and celebrate the natural composition of Australian landscape.

Reflecting First Peoples’ long tradition of gathering by and caring for the Birrarung (Yarra River), the new garden will be home to a waterway that people can sit near and take in the sounds of trickling water. The waterway will run along the edge of the garden near The Fox: NGV Contemporary.

With a stunning green space that supports community wellbeing and connection, the elevated urban garden will wrap around and connect the new The Fox: NGV Contemporary, NGV International, Arts Centre Melbourne’s Hamer Hall and Theatres Building (under the Spire), along with adjacent The Primrose Potter Australian Ballet Centre. Cafes and restaurants will be located at Arts Centre Melbourne and NGV, making the precinct an unmissable destination.

Complementing the rich tapestry of planting across the year, Laak Boorndap will present contemporary art and activation including new artwork commissions by First Peoples. The garden will also be home to significant

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contemporary sculpture from the collections of the NGV and Arts Centre Melbourne, open to the public both day and night.

Laak Boorndap delivers another crucial intervention into this rapidly growing part of the city, creating a new pedestrian pathway that will change how the Melbourne Arts Precinct – and Southbank as a whole – is accessed by visitors, residents, students and workers.

Built over Sturt St between City Road and Southbank Boulevard (which has been transformed from a bitumen roadway into the busy loading docks and back of house areas for NGV International, Arts Centre Melbourne, and the new The Fox: NGV Contemporary) the garden provides a quick, accessible and safe connection from the city directly from Princes Bridge through to Southbank Boulevard and the Arts Precinct.

Laak Boorndap and the new amenities that come with it will be a driver to transform the area – for visitors, residents and businesses alongside the many arts organisations that populate the broader Melbourne Arts Precinct.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Creative Industries and Minister for Development Victoria Colin Brooks

“Laak Boorndap will reshape the precinct and bring together nature, culture, art and design – creating a new destination for our city that will attract millions of visitors a year.”

Quotes attributable to Aunty Gail Smith, Language Elder from Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

“I gave it the name Laak Boorndap because to me it means a beautiful place for all people to visit and recognise our Country and our Wurundjeri ancestors. It’s not just a placename, it brings Sky Country, the heavens, and everyone back together on Country.”

Quotes attributable to Katrina Sedgwick, Director & CEO of Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation

“We’ve reached two extraordinary milestones with the final design and naming of the garden – Laak Boorndap. This space will be more than a garden – it is really a creative act that delivers biodiversity, beauty and social connection in a way that is diverse and ever-changing.”

“Planted for year-round beauty but designed for climate change resilience and biodiversity, this new garden will become a destination in and of itself, building connectivity and wellbeing for visitors, workers and residents alike.”

Quotes attributable to Ben Duckworth, Principal, Hassell

“Laak Boorndap will be a new type of public space for Melbourne – a place for people to be immersed in nature. A place for people to connect to each other, art and performance.”

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To download new renders of Laak Boorndap, [click here](#)

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ABOUT MAP CO

The Melbourne Arts Precinct Corporation (MAP Co) was established to harness the collective creativity of the Melbourne Arts Precinct in delivering Australia's largest ever cultural infrastructure project.

MAP Co is spearheading the Melbourne Arts Precinct Transformation and provides governance and an operational structure to one of Melbourne's most iconic cultural spaces: Fed Square.

Established by the Victorian Government, MAP Co is responsible for bringing to life a single continuous arts, civic, and cultural precinct stretching from Fed Square through to Southbank, NGV, and beyond.

Once the transformation is complete, MAP Co will also manage and activate the new 18,000 square metre expansive urban garden that will connect the Melbourne Arts Precinct in a seamless and immersive cultural experience.

For further information, visit artsprecinct.melbourne

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