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Minister for the Environment and Energy

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MUNGO MAN RETURNED TO COUNTRY

I would like to join all Australians in welcoming the return of Mungo Man and other ancestors to their country – the World Heritage listed Willandra Lakes Region.

This repatriation journey is a momentous one for the Paakantyi/Barkandji, Mutthi Mutthi and Ngiyampaa peoples who campaigned so long to bring their ancestors back to country.

We share their joy and respect their wishes to find a final resting place for Mungo Man and other ancestors among their people.

Our understanding of human settlement in Australia was reshaped in 1974 when ochre-covered burial remains were revealed by shifting sands in remote Willandra Lakes in south-west New South Wales. They are the oldest such remains found on this continent.

When the Willandra Lakes Region was included on the World Heritage List in 1981, it was in part because the site bears an exceptional testimony to a culture that continues to this day.

I am glad the Department of the Environment and Energy was able to support this repatriation, working with the New South Wales Government and traditional owners to ensure the safe return of Mungo Man and other ancestors to this globally important site, consistent with its management plan.

The Turnbull Government has committed \$1.65 million from July 2018 under the National Landcare Program to protect the natural and cultural heritage values of the Willandra Lakes Region. The funding will help preserve this place of stark beauty where Aboriginal people have lived for tens of thousands of years.

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