



**First Peoples'
Assembly of
Victoria**

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Assembly ready to commence negotiations with the State

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is ready to begin negotiations with the State; with key decisions on a mandate on the form of agreements the Assembly will seek, and a culturally strong and independent umpire for future Treaty negotiations.

This means that the Assembly is ready to sit across the table from the State.

Members also agreed to demand immediate action from the State to work towards an independent truth and justice process to recognise historic wrongs, and past and ongoing injustices as a result of colonisation.

The Assembly continued its focus on inclusivity and building the strength of its representative voice, voting to prioritise developing a model to enable more Traditional Owner groups to take up Reserved Seats on the Assembly.

During the Assembly's third meeting held this week, its 31 Victorian Traditional Owners strongly agreed a mandate for framework negotiations that seeks both statewide and local Treaties.

This model allows for broader statewide rights to be addressed, while also providing flexibility for different groups to pursue their own unique, localised priorities at their own pace. It rules nothing out in these early stages of the process, and leaves everything on the negotiating table.

Assembly Co-Chair, Bangerang woman, Aunty Geraldine Atkinson said the decision signalled the first major step towards a Framework under which Aboriginal groups will negotiate Treaties with the State.

"This is an historic occasion, we are now ready for discussions with the State on how Treaties will be negotiated," she said.

Assembly Co-Chair, Taungurung man, Marcus Stewart said the Assembly is now ready to sit across from the table and progress the treaty process, but without truth there can be no treaty, justice or equity for our people.

Background

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is the elected voice for Aboriginal people and communities in Victoria to progress Treaties.

The Assembly was elected by Victorian Aboriginal communities and Traditional Owners in 2019.

It has not been established to negotiate Treaties with the State. Rather, it will work with the State to create the Framework for negotiations and the rules and processes by which Treaties can be agreed in Victoria.

This includes a Self-determination fund that will help Aboriginal groups negotiate on an equal footing with the State and a Treaty Authority, an independent umpire, to oversee Treaty negotiations.

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