



# 2019 Elders consultations on a definition of an Elder



**First Peoples'  
Assembly of  
Victoria**

This document provides a summary on the definition of Eldership outlined in the PricewaterhouseCoopers Indigenous Consulting (PIC) Report. The 2019 PIC Report provides the views and knowledge of over 200 Elders from around Victoria.

[A summary of the report and the full report are available at www.firstpeoplesvic.org](http://www.firstpeoplesvic.org)

## Definition of Eldership in PIC Report

Most Elders who contributed to the PIC Report agreed that self-identification as an Elder should confirm Eldership. Many Elders also agreed that self-identification could determine eligibility for selection for the Elders' Voice and that if a definition is to be created it should be the role of the Elders' Voice once established. Most Elders did not feel that there is a need for all Elders to confirm their Eldership to be a member of the Elders' Voice.

## Process to confirm Eldership

Despite Elders agreeing self-identification is important for the Elders' Voice, most Elders also felt that a definition of Eldership and a process to confirm Eldership should be developed. Elders were adamant that any process for defining and confirming Eldership should be determined by Elders. To assist this process, participating Elders suggested key Eldership principles. However, Elders also recognised that these principles and Eldership in general were subjective and open to interpretation. Some Elders suggested that a process to confirm Eldership could be a task for the Elders' Voice. The complexity of Eldership definition is further nuanced by Elders agreeing that the Elders' Voice should not be divisive for Community and that participation should not be a burden on Elders.

## Contesting self-identification as an Elder

The report found most Elders who participated in the process felt that it would be unlikely that Eldership required more than self-identification for establishing the Elders' Voice. Most Elders considered it unlikely that anyone would falsely claim Eldership to participate in the Elders' Voice. If there was a need to challenge self-identification of Eldership during the selection process for Elders' Voice, some Elders proposed a process to confirm Eldership:

- Self-identification as an Elder
- A respectful process for Elders to contest Eldership in a safe, respectful, and culturally appropriate manner for both the Elder contesting and the individual whose Eldership is being contested
- Elders advised that the process should likely rely on confirmation from local communities and family members.

## Key principles of Eldership in the PIC Report

While participating Elders generally agreed that being an Elder is a process of self-identification, they did put forward a range of qualities and attributes they believed Elders commonly have. Elders noted that these qualities and attributes are subjective and concluded it would be difficult to use this outline to determine who is and isn't an Elder.

- **Respect** – have the respect of the Aboriginal community (particularly local community) and show respect to the Aboriginal community
- **Contribution** – have made an active contribution to Aboriginal community over an extended period
- **Connection** – to local Aboriginal community, culture and country
- **Understanding** – of Aboriginal community, culture and lore
- **Wisdom** – accumulated over a lifetime of experiences
- **Leadership and guidance** – share their wisdom and knowledge for the benefit of the Aboriginal community
- **Age** – there is no specific minimum age to be an Elder, however, years of lived experience are required in order to gain the wisdom, respect, understanding and other attributes required to be an Elder.