



**First Peoples'  
Assembly of  
Victoria**

ABN 51 636 189 412

## Communique

### Assembly Chamber April

This document is a summary of the meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly Chamber held on Thursday 1 April 2021.

The meeting was held at Worawa Aboriginal College in Healesville, with some Members also joining via video link. This was the first time Members had met in person since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was chaired by Co-Chair Aunty Geraldine Atkinson.

Wurundjeri Elder Aunty Joy Murphy Wandin welcomed Members to Wurundjeri Country at Coranderrk prior to the official opening of the Chamber meeting.

Aunty Geraldine opened the Chamber meeting, acknowledging the different countries Members were meeting from, paying respects to Elder's past, present and emerging. Aunty Geraldine then welcomed Aunty Lois Peeler who provided Members with a history of Worawa College. As is customary, a minutes' silence was then held for recent Sorry Business in our Communities.

### New Member for the South West

Recently admitted Member for the South West region, Aunty Charmaine Clarke read her maiden speech to the Chamber. In her speech, Aunty Charmaine shared her story as a member of the Stolen Generations who grew up in Ballarat orphanages with her five siblings. Over the past 32 years, Aunty Charmaine has worked in State and Federal cultural heritage protection, environmental and social policy development, justice, mental health and family violence.

Aunty Charmaine replaces outgoing Assembly Member Sissy Austin, who resigned earlier this year. Aunty Charmaine and the Chamber acknowledged the work and contributions of Ms Austin.



## Establishment of an Interim Elders' Voice

The Assembly Chamber voted to establish the Interim Elders' Voice which will be a Committee of the Assembly and the mechanism for Elders to have their voices heard in the work of the Assembly.

The Interim Elders' Voice will be set up to run for three months and will involve Elders leading the way in the design of the permanent Elders' Voice selection process, structure, role and responsibilities. Elders across Victoria will be invited to participate in these meetings to ensure that the Elders' Voice is designed by Elders themselves in true self-determination.

## Finalising protocols and internal process for triggering a dispute

The Chamber ratified two protocols that will govern conduct between the Assembly and the State in negotiations on the Treaty Elements under the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* (Vic).

A State Treaty Partner Protocol – which applies only to the State; and

A Reciprocal Protocol for Negotiations – which applies to both the Assembly and the State.

These protocols between the Assembly and the State Government guide how negotiations should be conducted. They are the agreed standards for negotiations and will operate with the aim of avoiding disputes between the Assembly and the State in this phase of the Treaty process.

The Chamber also endorsed a process allowing the Assembly to trigger a dispute with the State if required. Co-Chair Marcus Stewart noted that this is a landmark agreement with the State and provisions contained within the protocol included the State acknowledging its behaviour of the past.

## Presentation by Peter Walsh MP, Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

The Chamber welcomed Peter Walsh MP, Leader of the Nationals, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and Shadow Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to the April Chamber to present and take questions from Members. Members agreed that the Assembly will work across parliament to achieve the best outcomes for the Aboriginal community.

Members discussed a range of themes related to the commitment of a Coalition government to the Assembly, the Treaty process and the broader Aboriginal Affairs Portfolio. This included implementing recommendations of the proposed Yoo-rook Justice Commission and the importance of developing strong relationships with Members and local MPs. Peter Walsh recognised the importance of the Assembly and his desire to further strengthen relationships with the Assembly and its Members.

## **Discussion – Additional Pathways to Assembly Reserved Seating**

A discussion paper was tabled at the April Assembly Chamber on the topic of additional pathways to Assembly reserved seating. Members held a lengthy discussion on options to progress a future additional pathway to Assembly reserved seating. Members agreed that this is a critical piece of work that is very complex. The discussions were wide-ranging, considered, and productive. The Chamber agreed that the Assembly Business Committee should progress this work.

## **Workshop on the Treaty Negotiation Framework**

Part of the afternoon session of the Assembly Chamber was scheduled for Members to have their third workshop of a series, on the Treaty Negotiation Framework. Due to earlier items running over time, this workshop will instead be convened at the upcoming Assembly Treaty Committee in a fortnight. The workshop will facilitate conversations on local rights and nation-building.

The next meeting of the Assembly Chamber is scheduled for June.