

May 2021



First Peoples'
Assembly of
Victoria

Truth-telling and the Yoo-rook Justice Commission:

Fact sheet

What is Truth-telling?

Truth-telling is a process of openly sharing historical truths after periods of conflict. Truth-telling reveals and acknowledges human rights violations by promoting the voices of communities who have been victims of these violations.

First Peoples in this country have been calling for a truth-telling process for generations. Building on this activism, in June 2020, the Assembly agreed that truth-telling must be a fundamental part of Treaty-making and called on the government to establish a formal truth-telling process. The Yoo-rook Justice Commission was formally established in May 2021 in response to this call. The mandate and form of the Commission were designed by the Assembly and the government, based on consultations with Aboriginal communities across Victoria.

The Yoo-rook Justice Commission

Yoo-rook means 'truth' in the Wemba Wemba/Wamba Wamba language, which is spoken in the north-west region of Victoria. It is the first truth-telling body to be established in Australia. The Commission is independent of both government and the Assembly.

The Commission is led by five Commissioners - Chair Professor Eleanor Bourke and Commissioners Dr Wayne Atkinson, Professor the Honourable Kevin Bell QC AM, Sue-Anne Hunter and Distinguished Professor Maggie Walter. The Commissioners were appointed following an open nomination and assessment process.

The Commission will be guided by an Expert Advisory Committee and community. It must ensure cultural safety and avoid retraumatisation in its work. The Commission has a broad mandate to inquire into and report on *historical* systemic injustices perpetrated against First Peoples since colonisation (such as massacres, wars and genocide), as well as *ongoing* systemic injustices (such as policing and child protection).

The Commission's role will be to listen to First Peoples' stories and establish an official public record of First Peoples' experiences of systemic injustices since colonisation of Victoria, including the ongoing impact of these injustices. Its aim is to develop a shared understanding among all Victorians of our shared history and the impacts of colonisation, as well as the diversity, strength and resilience of First Peoples' cultures, knowledge, and traditional practices.

The Commission is expected to make detailed recommendations for changes to laws, policy and education and the types of matters to be included in future Treaties. Its first report is expected by June 2022, with a final report by June 2024.

Next steps

The Yoo-rook Justice Commission is currently setting up its processes that will guide how it does its work. So that the Commission's work is guided by community's views from the start, the Assembly will provide a report to the Commission collating feedback received from its consultations. This report will be provided by the end of June 2021.

To read the Letters Patent that set out the Commission's mandate in full, [see here](#).

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