



**First Peoples'  
Assembly of  
Victoria**

ABN 51 636 189 412

# Communique

## Assembly Chamber June 2021

This is a summary of the meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria held on 17 and 18 June 2021. The meeting was held at Century Inn, Traralgon and via video link. The meeting was chaired by Co-Chair Marcus Stewart.

### Day 1

GunaiKurnai Elder Uncle Lloyd Hood and Nicky Moffatt conducted a smoking ceremony at Century Inn, Traralgon. Uncle Lloyd Hood welcomed Members to GunaiKurnai country and acknowledged the various Aboriginal lands that Members were meeting on, paying respect to Elders past, present and emerging. As is customary, the Chair held a minutes' silence for recent Sorry Business in our Communities.

### Indigenous Governance Session

Michelle Deshong, previous CEO of the Australian Indigenous Governance Institute, ran a session for Members on Indigenous Governance. Michelle presented on key principles of Indigenous governance, drawing on Australian and international examples and key learnings from different jurisdictions. Michelle discussed how to embed self-determination in governance structures.

### Statewide reform and Traditional Owner Treaties

Discussions to progress the Treaty Negotiation Framework were a key priority for the Assembly Chamber. Members focused on the development of key elements that will be required for the Treaty Negotiation Framework to deliver real and tangible change. Members expressed their support for structural reform to strengthen self-determination at the statewide level and at the local level for Traditional Owner groups. Members agreed to progress the development of the Treaty Negotiation Framework and emphasised the importance of the Framework being accessible and easily understood by community.



## Yoo-rrook Justice Commission

The Chair provided an update on the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission, including an update on the report to be handed to the Commission from the Assembly. The Chair noted that the Assembly will be holding a special event to handover the report in the coming weeks.

## Terms of Reference for the three Assembly Committees

The Chamber voted on new Terms of Reference for the three Assembly Committees. The Terms of Reference set out the purpose and roles and responsibilities of each Committee and set out how each Committee is to operate. The Committees are responsible for progressing the key work of the Assembly, including recommending decisions to be brought to the Assembly Chamber.

## Amendments to the Members' Charter

The Chamber voted to amend the Members' Charter. The Members' Charter outlines the role and responsibilities of Members and was amended to strengthen Member accountability. The amendments reinforce the accountability of Members to the Assembly and to their communities.

## Day 2

The Chair welcomed all Members to Day 2 of Chamber and acknowledged all the Countries Members were meeting from and paid respect to Elders past, present and emerging.

## Presentation to Chamber by GunaiKurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation

Roger Fenwick, CEO of GunaiKurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLAWAC), presented to the Assembly Chamber on experiences and lessons learnt from negotiation processes. Roger outlined GLAWAC's governance structure and discussed the complexity in balancing cultural lore and white law. Roger and Members discussed the importance of community feeling the benefits of negotiations.

## Building a Treaty framework for an uncertain future

Members discussed the sequencing of Treaty reforms and the role of the Assembly in different stages of reform. Members discussed what it means for the Assembly to have a mandate from community and the need for the Assembly to be guided by the views of the community.

## Community engagement

Prior to the Assembly Chamber, Members were provided with engagement materials on the Treaty Negotiation Framework, the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (UNDRIP) and on other key work priorities of the Assembly. In this session, Chris Johnson, the Head of Engagement, provided an overview of these materials and asked for Members' feedback. Members expressed the importance of partnering with other Aboriginal groups in order to reach as many people as possible.

## Reports

### **Interim Elders' Voice Report**

Tracey Evans, as Co-Chair of the Assembly Business Committee, provided a report on the appointment of the Interim Elders' Voice Co-Chairs. Tracey Evans introduced Aunty Charmaine Clarke and Uncle Andrew Gardiner as the Interim Co-Chairs. Aunty Charmaine Clarke and Uncle Andrew Gardiner shared their aspirations for the Interim Elders' Voice and explained how Elders could get involved.

### **Co-Chairs' Report**

Co-Chair Aunty Geraldine Atkinson gave the Co-Chairs report. Aunty Geraldine Atkinson outlined the key work of the Assembly in the recent months and updated Members on the engagement activities of the Co-Chairs. Aunty Geraldine Atkinson noted that despite recent lockdowns, the Co-Chairs and the Assembly more broadly have continued to engage with community members and stakeholders.

### **CEO's Report**

CEO Andy Gargett gave a report on the operations of the Assembly. Andy Gargett noted the work being done to increase the Assembly's enrolments and regional footprint. Chris Johnson provided an update on the new partnerships the Assembly had established.

**The next meeting of the Assembly Chamber is scheduled for 2 and 3 September.**