



**First Peoples'
Assembly of
Victoria**

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The Hon. Jaclyn Symes
Attorney-General
Level 26, 121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne, VIC 3000

16 December 2021

To the Hon. Jaclyn Symes,

We write as the elected Co-Chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

As you know, the Assembly is the democratically elected body representing Traditional Owners and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Victorian Treaty process.

We recently celebrated the second anniversary of the Assembly's inaugural meeting. Over the past two years, Assembly members have been hard at work yarning with Community about Treaty.

We are making significant progress, yet we know we still have much to do ahead of us. This is important, historic work, and we are making sure we take the time to get each step right as we make our way along the path to Treaty. We appreciate you and your colleagues' commitment to walking with us.

As we continue the journey to Treaty, there are reforms that could be passed right now that would improve the lives of First Peoples in Victoria.

One such reform is raising the age of criminal responsibility.

Currently in Victoria, children as young as 10 years old can be locked up in prisons. Nationally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are disproportionately impacted by these laws, accounting for 65 per cent of younger children currently incarcerated.

We understand that there have been conversations in other jurisdictions to make a commitment to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 12. However, experts agree that the minimum age of criminal responsibility should be 14.



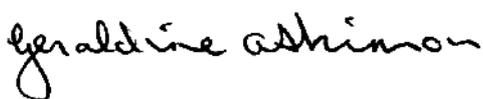
We ask that you, as Attorney-General of Victoria, listen to the experts and legislate this change – now.

This does not need to, nor should it, wait for Treaty. It is a much needed, sensible, compassionate, evidence-based and simple reform that Community overwhelmingly supports.

We want the Government to stop locking up our children.

This is an opportunity for the Victorian Government to further demonstrate its commitment to listening to the voices of First Peoples and lead the nation in creating a better future together as equals.

Warm regards,



Aunty Geraldine Atkinson

Co-Chair

First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria



Marcus Stewart

Co-Chair

First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria