

TREATY FOR VICTORIA



We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and pay our deepest respects to all Elders, past and present. Our work takes us through all Country in the area now known as Victoria, from the coast to the mountains, the rivers and the plains. We give thanks to all who welcome us to their unceded lands and waters, and further extend that gratitude to all First Peoples in Victoria who have generously offered their time, their ideas and their feedback to help guide this journey to Treaty.



**FIRST PEOPLES'
ASSEMBLY OF
VICTORIA**



First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria

ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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Our culture has stood the test of time. We want to share and celebrate it with everyone. All we ask in return is for the freedom and power to make the decisions that affect our communities and our land.

Marcus Stewart and Aunty Geraldine Atkinson
Co-Chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria

A MESSAGE FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

Over the course of the year, progress at the Assembly was made in leaps and bounds. Though COVID disrupted our face-to-face engagements in the first half of the year, our elected members, staff and Community rose to the challenge.

Our yarns with mob took place everywhere they possibly could. These conversations culminated in some major milestones as our Community told us exactly what's needed on the pathway to Treaty.

We heeded those calls by appointing two Elders to lead the design of the Elders' Voice, a council of Elders to give cultural guidance to the Assembly; we opened an application process for Traditional Owner groups without formal recognition to apply for a reserved seat on our Assembly; we presented Community's wishes for truth-telling to the historic Yoorrook Justice Commission; we sold out Shepparton for the biggest, deadliest First Nations music line-up to kick off the North East By-election; we hosted our first ever Youth Forum to ensure the voices of our future leaders are being heard; and we ended the year by sealing the deal for the establishment of Australia's first ever 'Treaty Authority', an independent umpire to oversee Treaty negotiations.

This is history-making stuff. Our mandate is to deliver a framework by which Treaties will be negotiated for the first time ever in Victoria. We are doing that by ensuring Community's aspirations are front and centre. Community are the architects, our elected Members are the builders. It's through their feedback and consultation that we are establishing the foundations, the ground rules, that will set the parameters for future Treaty-making.



At the heart of Treaty is self-determination – the basic principle that First Peoples should be in the driver's seat over issues that affect our communities, our culture and our Country. Our work is self-determination in action.

We've said time and again that when it comes to Treaty, nothing is off the table. No idea is impossible and no dream too big.

We invite every Victorian on this journey with us. Treaty will bring immeasurable benefits to all our lives and will go a long way in resetting the relationship, and the power imbalance, between First Peoples and the state. This is a journey best taken together.

Thank you for walking with us.

Yours sincerely,

Aunty Geraldine Atkinson and Marcus Stewart
Co-Chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria

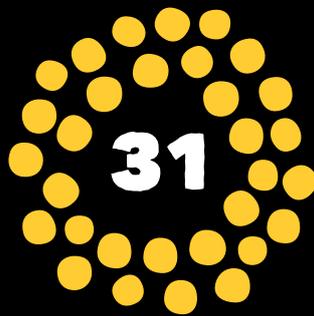
ABOUT THE ASSEMBLY

A Voice for Victoria

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is the independent and democratically elected body representing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Victorian Treaty process.



Established in December 2019, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is the first body of its kind in Australia.



The Assembly is currently made up of up to 31 Members – all proud Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria.



These Aboriginal leaders were chosen by their communities to represent Community views.



Twenty-one representatives were determined by a statewide Aboriginal Community vote held between September and October 2019.

10 representatives were appointed to reserved seats by formally recognised Traditional Owner groups.

How is the Assembly structured?

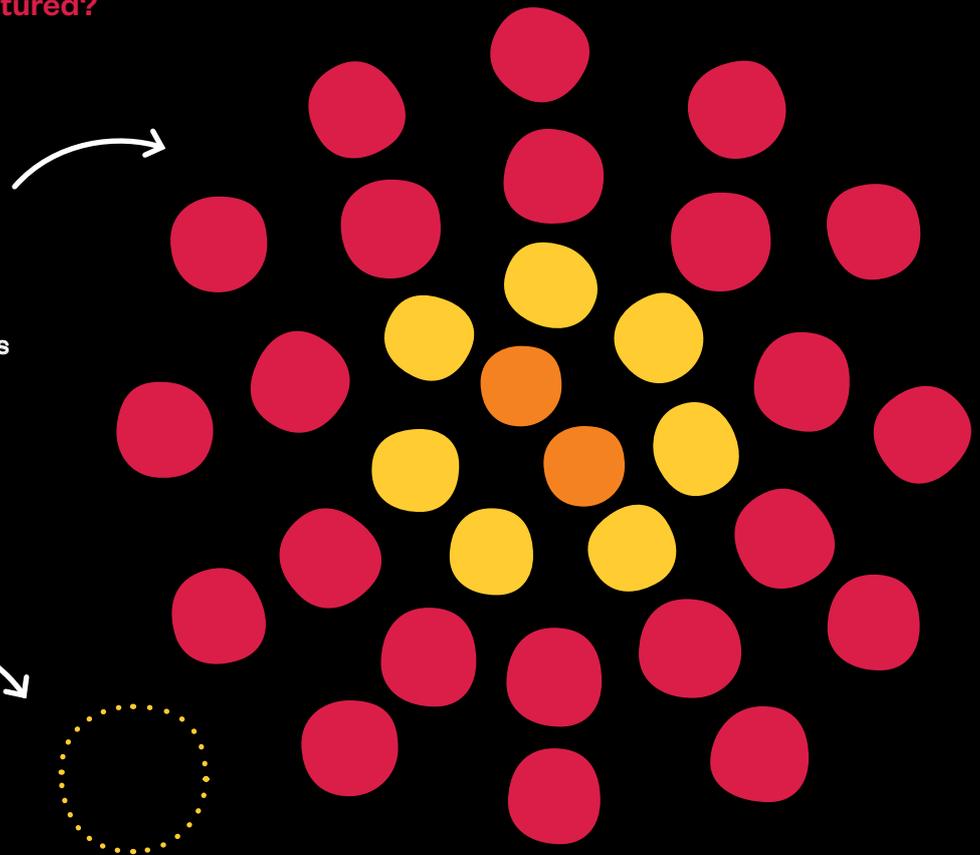
Assembly Chamber

Currently 31 members

- Meets quarterly to make all key Assembly decisions on the Treaty process.
- Various committees meet in between Chamber meetings to progress details and prepare options.
- Members responsible for regularly engaging with their communities before each meeting.

Elders' Voice

- Form is to be determined.
- Provides cultural strength and advice to the Assembly.



Executive

Nine directors elected by the Assembly Members

- Led by Co-Chairs, elected by all representatives.
- Implements decisions of the Assembly and leads the agenda.

General seats

Currently 21 Members

- Elected by statewide vote in 2019.
- Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria have the opportunity to vote every four years.

Reserved seats

Currently 10 Members

One representative appointed by each formally recognised Traditional Owner group.



Our commitment to Community

The path ahead might not be a straight one, but these are the commitments we make to each other and to Community on the journey.

WELCOME

Our strength is drawn from our Community's diversity. We aim to make sure everyone is welcome and everyone is heard.

RESPECT

We will always treat each other with respect and we'll call out disrespect when we see it.

LISTEN

Like our culture, our Community's ideas are rich and diverse, we'll always be up for a yarn. We need your ideas, feedback and guidance.

WHAT A YEAR!

JULY 2021

With Truth-telling process secured, conversations with Community now centre around the details of the architecture needed for Treaty making. Nothing is off the table!

ELDERS' VOICE Respected Elders and Assembly Members Aunty Charmaine Clarke and Uncle Andrew Gardiner appointed as Co-Chairs of the Interim Elders' Voice

NAIDOC WEEK

Our team was out and about between lockdowns to celebrate.
We launched calls for a NAIDOC public holiday

SEPTEMBER

TYERRI YOORROOK

We presented the *Tyerrri Yoorrook* (Seed of Truth) report to the Yoorrook Justice Commission – outlining Community's hopes and wishes for the truth-telling process

ELDERS' VOICE HOTLINE

1800 TREATY is launched

NOVEMBER

COVID RESTRICTIONS EASE

In-person events resume

AUGUST

THE SHOW MUST GO ON

COVID lockdown meant we launched a new series of online yarning circles and forums for Community to stay connected

OCTOBER

CHAMBER Key decisions made about additional pathways to recognition for Traditional Owner groups and to begin formal negotiations on the Treaty Negotiation Framework

DECEMBER

CHAMBER Members meet on Dja Dja Wurrung Country to progress ideas about the Treaty Authority and Self-Determination Fund

RAISE THE AGE We join the call





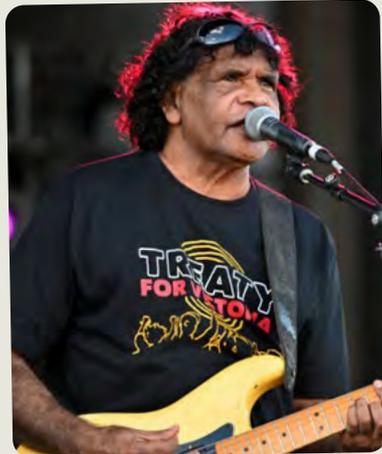
JANUARY 2022

CLOTHING THE GAP

\$500 voucher competition

SURVIVAL DAY

We spent Survival Day with mob



FEBRUARY

CHAMBER Members met on Yorta Yorta Country to discuss cultural governance and the Treaty Authority

SORRY NOT SORRY

We said the former PM Scott Morrison's remarks about the National Apology belonged in the bin

TREATY DAY OUT

We sold out Shepparton with the biggest, deadliest music line-up

MARCH

YOORROOK HEARINGS BEGIN

CHAMBER Members meet on Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country to discuss in-principle agreement about Treaty Authority and plan further Community consultation about the Self-Determination Fund

MAY

SHEPPARTON OFFICE

Our regional footprint begins with first office opening

YOORROOK HEARING

Marcus Stewart gives evidence

PATHWAYS TO RECOGNITION

Application process launched

INDIGENOUS AFL ROUNDS

Treaty match with Fitzroy Stars, Dream Time at the G and more

BIPARTISAN SUPPORT

The Victorian Opposition announces support for Treaty

NORTH EAST BY-ELECTION

Mob in the North East turn out to have a say in who will represent them

APRIL

TREATY SURVEY LAUNCHED

JUNE

KOORREEN KAMEET NGANANG

First Treaty Youth Forum held

CHAMBER Members meet online to approve Treaty agreement before gathering on Gadubanud Country of the Eastern Maar people for a ceremonial signing of Treaty Authority agreement and to develop further details about Treaty Negotiation Framework.

TREATY AUTHORITY

Agreement to establish Treaty Authority signed with Victorian Government.

TREATY AUTHORITY LEGISLATION PASSES LOWER HOUSE

✓ **TRUTH-TELLING**

Negotiated the establishment of the Yoorrook Justice Commission, represented Community’s wishes and provided comprehensive evidence at historic hearing

✓ **OWNED OUR REPRESENTATION**

Created additional pathways to recognition for Traditional Owner groups, ensuring Aboriginal communities, not Government, determine how to represent themselves on journey to Treaty

✓ **STRENGTHENED OUR DEMOCRACY**

Held a by-election in the North East region with greater voter turnout than the 2019 election

✓ **EMPOWERED COMMUNITY TO HAVE A SAY**

Hosted over 360 Community events and had more than 23,000 conversations to hear from mob

✓ **BUILT OUR REACH AND AMPLIFIED VOICE**

Established our position as a strong voice with nearly 5,000 news items, while growing our social media following to more than 48,000 followers

✓ **SECURED AGREEMENT FOR A TREATY UMPIRE**

Developed a model informed by Community input for a Treaty Authority that is independent from Government and grounded in our culture, lore and law, and secured agreement with the Victorian Government for its creation

● **AGREE ON A TREATY NEGOTIATION FRAMEWORK**

Set the ground rules and scope for Treaty negotiations

←
UP NEXT

● **SECURE A SELF-DETERMINATION FUND**

Ensure our communities have enough resources to be ‘Treaty-ready’ and build wealth and economic independence for future generations

● **HOLD FRESH ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS**

Allow Community to choose the next representatives who will negotiate the statewide Treaty



BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A BETTER FUTURE



“ We’ve got a long journey ahead of us, but it’s great to see people in Victoria are willing to walk with us, as ultimately this is about creating a better future together. ”

Aunty Geraldine Atkinson Co-Chair of the First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria, Bangerang and Wiradjuri Elder



BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

The Assembly is working with Community to develop the foundations for Treaty-making – here’s where we’re at:

Treaty Negotiation Framework



The Treaty Negotiation Framework will set out the ground rules for negotiating a statewide Treaty and Traditional Owner Treaties, including what can be included in a Treaty and who may negotiate a Treaty.

Built on feedback from Community, Members developed a negotiation brief for an ambitious Treaty Negotiation Framework at the October 2021 Assembly Chamber. This paved the way for the Assembly to advance discussions with the State, with an aim to reach agreement on a Treaty Negotiation Framework by October 2022.

The Assembly will be pushing for a Treaty that will cover statewide matters and will also empower Traditional Owners to negotiate individual Treaties on their own Countries that reflect their needs and priorities.

The Treaty Negotiation Framework is being shaped by what we hear in our Community engagement and consultations. We are working towards a Treaty Negotiation Framework that will enable First Peoples to pursue their aspirations in Treaty negotiations, in a fair and inclusive Treaty negotiation process.



Self-Determination Fund

The Self-Determination Fund will be a First Peoples-controlled fund empowering First Peoples to negotiate Treaties on a more level playing field with the Victorian Government and to build capacity, wealth and prosperity for future generations.

In March 2022, the Assembly Chamber agreed on key principles to inform the establishment of the Self-Determination Fund, which were based on Community feedback, extensive research and expert legal advice.

The Assembly will be responsible for administering the Fund for the benefit of Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander peoples in Victoria – now and into the future. This means that First Peoples will be making decisions about First Peoples' financial resources.



Treaty Authority

The Treaty Authority will be an independent umpire to facilitate and oversee Treaty negotiations.



In June 2022, the Assembly and the Victorian Premier Dan Andrews signed an agreement to create a culturally strong Treaty Authority that:

- will be outside of usual Government systems
- won't report to a minister
- will have funding insulated from political cycles
- will be led by First Peoples
- will be grounded in lore, law and culture.

A special signing ceremony was held at the June Assembly Chamber – on Gadubanud Country of the Eastern Maar people in Lorne.

The historic Treaty Authority legislation was tabled in the Victorian Parliament on 7 June 2022.

WATCH



► Treaty Authority agreement signing ceremony

TRUTH HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING



■ ■ The Truth-telling process will uncover so many tales of heartbreak, but when you join the dots, a picture unfolds of deliberate and persistent attempts to wipe out our people and culture over centuries. Our experiences are woven together, and so the solutions and way to heal must also be worked through together. The Assembly's job will be to help identify the common factors and craft the necessary systemic reforms through Treaty. ■ ■

Aunty Geraldine Atkinson Co-Chair of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, Bangerang and Wiradjuri Elder



TRUTH-TELLING

Truth-telling is a process of openly sharing historical truths. It acknowledges human rights violations and raises the voices of victims.

First Peoples in this country have been calling for a truth-telling process for generations, which is why the First Peoples' Assembly negotiated with the Government to have the Yoorrook Justice Commission established to hold a truth-telling process.

The Commission will establish an official record of the impact of colonisation on First Peoples in Victoria using First Peoples' stories. It will also determine the causes and consequences of systemic injustices and make detailed recommendations about practical actions and reforms needed in Victoria. Importantly, their findings will guide our Treaty negotiations.

In September 2021, the Assembly presented the Yoorrook Justice Commission with the Tyerri Yoorrook Report. *Tyerri Yoorrook* means 'seed of truth' in Wamba Wamba/Wemba Wemba.

The report outlines the ideas, hopes and expectations for a truth-telling process that our communities shared with us – which we have entrusted to the Yoorrook Justice Commission as they embark on this historic journey.

Wurrek Tyerrang, or public hearings, began in March 2022. The Assembly submitted its first round of evidence to the Commission in May, which was a comprehensive report presenting evidence of hundreds of years of oppression.

Co-Chair Marcus Stewart answered questions put to him by the five Commissioners examining the importance and scope of Treaty and truth-telling, as well as the constitutional, structural and justice reforms necessary.

“What we heard loud and clear from our Community – and I really want to emphasise that point, it was very prominent in our conversations – that there needed to be a truth-telling process that delivered justice, and without truth there couldn't be Treaty or justice,” Marcus told the Commission.



▶ **Marcus Stewart appears at Yoorrook**
May 2022 (Day 6)

MEET THE MEMBERS





Our Members are all Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria, elected by their Communities to represent their interests during the Treaty process

NORTH-WEST

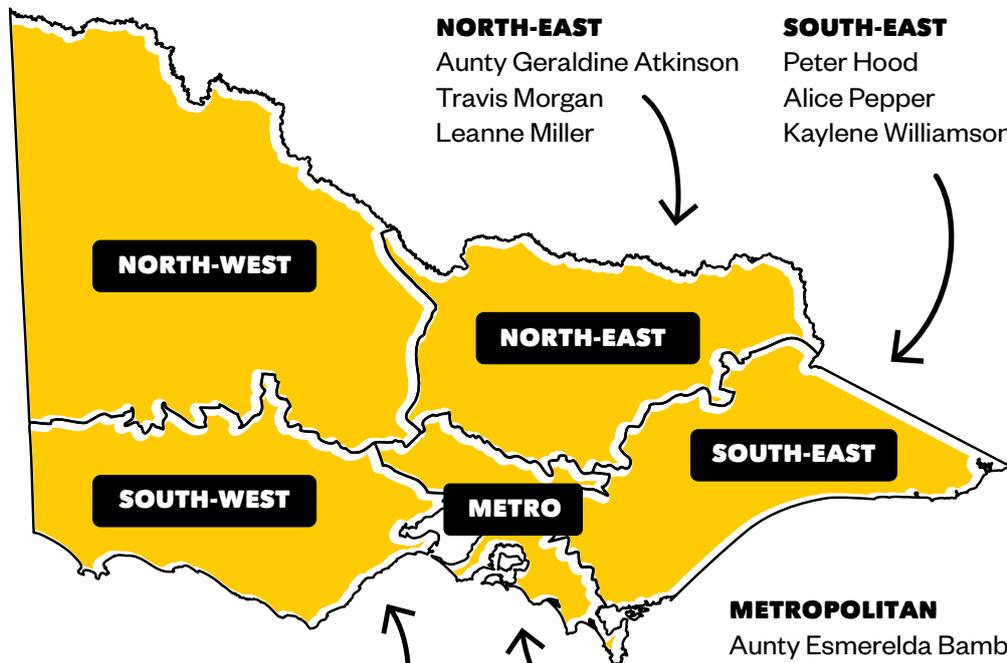
Jacinta Chaplin
Raylene Harradine
Jason Kelly

NORTH-EAST

Aunty Geraldine Atkinson
Travis Morgan
Leanne Miller

SOUTH-EAST

Peter Hood
Alice Pepper
Kaylene Williamson



RESERVED SEATS

Dylan Clarke
Uncle Shane Clarke
Melissa Jones
Troy McDonald
Marcus Stewart
Aunty Donna Wright
Sean 'Waikarra' Fagan
Jamie Lowe
Uncle Andrew Gardiner
Trent Nelson

SOUTH-WEST

Uncle Michael Mookeye Bell
Aunty Charmaine Clarke
Jordan Edwards

METROPOLITAN

Aunty Esmerelda Bamblett
Muriel Bamblett
Rueben Berg
Dr Carolyn Briggs AM
Matthew Burns
Tracey Evans
Trevor Gallagher
Ngarra Murray
Alister Thorpe

GENERAL SEAT MEMBERS



Jacinta Chaplin

Wadi Wadi

Member for North West

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Jason Kelly

Mutthi Mutthi and Wamba Wamba

Member for North West

jasonk@firstpeoplesvic.org



Muriel Bamblett

Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung and Boon Wurrung

Member for Metropolitan

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Matthew Burns

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Member for Metropolitan

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Uncle Michael Mookeye Bell

Gunditjmara

Member for South West

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Raylene Harradine

Dja Dja Wurrung, Latje Latje and Wotjobaluk

Member for North West

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Rueben Berg

Gunditjmara

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Aunty Esmerelda Bamblett

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Aunty Charmaine Clarke

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Jordan Edwards

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Member for South West

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Travis Morgan

Yorta Yorta and Wemba Wemba

Member for North East

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Ngarra Murray

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Leanne Miller

Dhulanyagen Ulupna of the Yorta Yorta people

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Aunty Geraldine Atkinson

Bangerang and Wiradjuri

Member for the North East

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Alister Thorpe

Gunai, Yorta Yorta and Gunditjmara

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Peter Hood

Kurnai connections to Yorta Yorta, Bangerang, Taungurung and Wurundjeri

Member for South East

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Alice Pepper

Yorta Yorta, Mutti Mutti, Arrernte, Gunai and Gunditjmara

Member for South East

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RESERVED SEAT MEMBERS



Marcus Stewart

Nira Illim bulluk man of the Taungurung Nation

Taungurung Land and Waters Council

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Troy McDonald

Gunaikurnai

Gunaikurnai Land and Waters

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Uncle Andrew Gardiner

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung

Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage

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Wotjobaluk

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Jamie Lowe

Gunditjmara

Eastern Maar

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Uncle Shane Clarke

Yorta Yorta, Wamba, Bunurong

Bunurong Land Council

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Replacing Rob Ogden who retired this year.



Our newest

Member:

Travis Morgan

Yorta Yorta and

Wemba Wemba

Member for the

North East region

Community in the North East region of Victoria headed to the polls over a four-week by-election from late February 2022. They chose Travis Morgan as the next Member who would represent them during the Treaty process. Travis grew up within the strong Aboriginal Community of Echuca.

“Treaty for me is about having choice. It’s about having self-determination and power to make the decisions for my kids; to be able to make the decision on who they want to be and not being held back by the systems that have been in play for decades. And I hope to have those barriers lifted for my kids and me having a chance to influence that with the rest of the North East.”

Travis has stepped into the seat left by Nartarsha Bamblett, a Yorta Yorta, Kurnai, Walpiri and Wiradjeri woman. Tarsh was the youngest Member elected to the Assembly and stepped down in November 2021 to continue discovering and healing herself on Country. We thank her for the great contribution she made to our collective journey.



MORE ROOM AT THE TABLE



“Our journey to Treaty will not be constrained by western concepts and colonial systems, we’ll do things our way. That includes deciding how we organise and represent ourselves. It’s up to mob to decide who is mob, not Government.”

Marcus Stewart Co-Chair of the First Peoples’ Assembly of Victoria



A NEW PATHWAY FOR TRADITIONAL OWNERS

In May 2022, we introduced a new pathway for Traditional Owner groups who do not have formal recognition under existing state or federal legislation to apply directly to our Assembly for a reserved seat. This will mean Traditional Owner groups will no longer be reliant on protracted judicial processes in order to be formally represented on the Assembly. It means more room at the table for our mobs, doing business our way.

There are currently 31 Members who sit on the Assembly. Of those, 21 fill our general seats, and are elected by Community following Assembly elections. The remaining are reserved seats – designated for each Traditional Owner group in Victoria who has formal recognition under legislation.

Traditional Owner groups who do not have that formal recognition can now apply directly to the Assembly for a reserved seat, provided they meet certain criteria, such as:

- The group's application area is not over any land that is already covered by existing reserved seat holders
- The group has significant support among Traditional Owners for the area
- The group is an established group or nation
- The group has ongoing connection to Country
- Applications will be considered by the Assembly Chamber and can be approved by a special majority vote.

Guidelines and application forms can be found on our website: firstpeoplesvic.org/reserved-seat-pathway

FINDING OUR ELDERS' VOICE



Elders are fundamental to who we are as First Nations peoples. They are the keepers of our culture, and their knowledge guides us on all matters. When it comes to Treaty, their voices must be heard.



FINDING OUR ELDERS' VOICE

Community has long recognised that the wisdom of our Elders is central to the Treaty process. This is why the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria established an interim Elders' Voice.

Two senior Assembly Members, Aunty Charmaine Clarke and Uncle Andrew Gardiner were appointed as Co-Chairs of the interim Elders' Voice, tasked with consulting Elders across Victoria to design a permanent model.

Aunty Charmaine and Uncle Andrew are travelling the state to ask Elders questions such as, *Who should sit on the Elders' Voice? How often should meetings be held? How do you define an Elder?* The Elders' Voice will be a council of Elders whose wisdom and knowledge will guide us on the pathway to Treaty.

The pandemic caused significant disruptions to the Elders' Voice work throughout 2021 and early 2022, given that Elders are some of our most vulnerable Community members health-wise.

We also know that many of our Elders prefer face-to-face communication and so transitioning events wholly to Zoom was often a challenge.

Through adversity comes innovation, however, as our interim Elders' Voice Co-Chairs launched the 'Elders' Voice Hotline': a phone number for Elders to ring up and book in a one-on-one yarn with Aunty Charmaine or Uncle Andrew.

Additionally, we also launched our inaugural The Elders' Voice newsletter – a physical, printed newsletter mailed out to the homes of Elders and enrolees across the state. Our newsletter belongs to our Elders; a place to keep them informed and connected, to tell their stories and to show our gratitude. Face to face Elders' Voice gatherings have resumed.

By the end of 2022, a report will be put to the Assembly proposing a design for a permanent Elders' Voice and clarifying its role in Treaty-making.



What is Eldership?

Wisdom from Uncle Rob Lowe

“To me it can define anything or anyone. You’re not classed as an Elder because of your age. You could be classed as an Elder when you’re 21. At 21, someone could be looking up at that person and that person could be a mentor. There’s different versions of how you class an Elder. Sometimes I don’t even do it to myself, I class myself as an apprentice Elder, because I’m still learning.”

Are you an Elder? We want to hear from you!

Call 1800 TREATY (1800 873 289) to have a yarn with Auntie Charmaine or Uncle Andrew about how we should design the Elders' Voice. Or get in touch with us via email: eldersvoice@firstpeoplesvic.org

And don't forget to check our website for events and gatherings happening near you: firstpeoplesvic.org/elders-voice/
All Elders are paid a sitting fee for their time and contribution at gatherings

A worthy welcome from Uncle Andrew

Uncle Andrew welcomed Members of Parliament to Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country from the floor of Victorian Parliament ahead of the debate on the Treaty Authority legislation.

This was an important moment on a day that represented decolonisation in action: removing the shackles of western systems and doing things our way – just as the Treaty Authority will.



Uncle Rob Lowe with Auntie Charmaine Clarke.
Image credit: Charles Pakana, Victorian Aboriginal News

WE'VE BEEN YARNING WITH MOB ACROSS THE STATE



Getting everyone 'Treaty-ready' means keeping Community up to date on the process and capturing their ambitions as we develop the foundations for Treaty-making. It also means getting more people enrolled so they can have their say.

It's important that there are opportunities for all voices to be heard, so we've reached out to Communities, organisations and individuals – ranging from our Elders to youth and everyone in between – in a range of different ways.

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

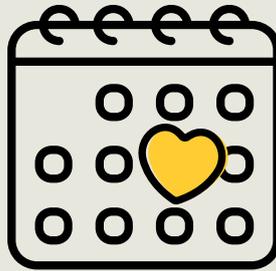
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



23,050

Interactions

We've been yarning with mob every chance we get.



398

Activities

Yarning circles, community events, one-on-ones and more!



53

By-election Voting Booths

We had in-person voting all across towns and communities across the North East.



3,000+

Attendees

We sold out Treaty Day Out: Shepparton.



↑ 20%

Enrolment

We saw big growth in enrolment from the previous year.



602

Treaty Survey Responses

We've heard from mob across the state.

Yarning circles, community events and one-on-ones

Over the past 12 months, we've held over 360 engagement activities and yarned with over 23,000 people in person and online.

Despite the challenges of COVID-19 and extended lockdowns and restrictions in Victoria, our conversations continued online and resumed in-person wherever possible.

We've held yarning circles and flipped snags on barbecues with groups, organisations, businesses and communities from Ballarat to Bairnsdale and everywhere in between. We've given presentations with footy clubs, schools, community organisations, the public sector and workplaces around the state to get the word out about Treaty, hear feedback from Community and give all Victorians the chance to get involved.



Discussion papers

Our discussion papers on the Self-Determination Fund and the Treaty Authority outlined our ideas for these two foundations for Treaty-making. We received feedback in written responses from individuals, organisations and groups.



The Assembly's Co-Chairs, Members and staff also received feedback on the discussion papers in our engagements with Community members and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.





Every bit of feedback we receive is considered by our Members and informs the future of Treaty-making in Victoria.

Treaty Survey

We heard from 602 people in response to our Treaty Survey, which was open to all Victorian Traditional Owners and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Victoria, over the age of 16, to complete online or on paper from March – May 2022.

Our Treaty Survey was one way we heard about what First Peoples want in Treaties and the Treaty-making process. It asked questions about areas where Treaties can support mob to take control of our own affairs, about changes to Government structures that could be negotiated in a statewide Treaty, and about the Treaty Authority and Self-Determination Fund.

The Assembly worked with an Aboriginal research team from the Australian National University to develop the survey, informed by six focus group consultations in Shepparton, Bendigo and Melbourne in December 2021. The survey was promoted widely and hardcopy surveys were posted to everyone on our enrolment list.

Survey participants were aged between 16 and 87 years and from a range of different clans and nation groups.





SOUTH WEST YOUTH FORUM

First ever Treaty Youth Forum

Our young ones are our future. It's important we make culturally safe spaces for our youth to share their Treaty aspirations, and to be heard and included as we set the parameters for Treaty-making. The work we do now will significantly shape the state of Victoria that our young people will inherit.

Our inaugural Koorreen Kameet Nganang: Treaty Youth Forum was held in Warrnambool in June 2022.

Around 40 young people came together to share their vision for Treaty. They also got involved in an Indigenous hip-hop outreach program and enjoyed a range of other deadly activities.

At the end of the forum, participants put forward the South West Youth Statement on Treaty that was presented at the June Chamber meeting.

The Assembly will host future youth forums across different regions of Victoria.



▶ South West Youth Forum



Forum artwork by Amelia Bell, Gunditjmarra



SOUTH WEST YOUTH STATEMENT ON TREATY, 8 JUNE 2022

We, the youth of the South West, call upon the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria to hear our voices.

Our history tells us we are a culturally proud mob. We are staunch, resilient, passionate, connected, strong and determined.

Colonisation has cost us lots. Connection to Country, Lore, traditions, our authority and so much knowledge has been lost. Whole Clans were lost. Our Land was stolen. Even children were stolen.

But we still have our voices, our families, our kinship systems, our connection to culture and Country. We have pride in our cultures.

We have our Elders and their traditional knowledge.

Treaty is about Self-determination.

Self-determination means to go for something and keep going. It means having the rights and freedom to do so.

We need an end of racism – we need equality.

We need land and water – we need authority over our lands and waters.

We want royalties for all the resources that have been taken.

We need languages, traditional knowledge and proper history taught in schools. There could be Koorie Colleges – cultural schools, for mob only.

We wish to see more job training and opportunities, better supports like Clontarf in more schools, and better education outcomes.

Our education, including universities, should be free.

We want accessible and affordable housing.

We want accessible mental health services.

We want healing centres.

We want to raise the age of incarceration.

We want to eliminate prejudice against any minority within our communities.

We want to celebrate and acknowledge our Indigenous leaders.

Places should be given their proper names with signs in local language.

We want a new Australian Anthem. Australia Day is a day of mourning. It should be abolished, not celebrated.

We want climate justice.

We want our voices heard and we want to be treated equally and with respect.

Young people have often turned to activism to get things done and get our voices heard. We still need to do this.

We can educate ourselves.

We can go to cultural meetings and understand what's going on.

We can put our foot in the door.

We can all enrol and vote for our future and encourage others to get involved.

We can become leaders in our communities.

This is our message to all the Members of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

Thank you for your work towards Treaty and thank you for hearing us.



MAKING NOISE IN THE NORTH EAST

North East By-election

To fill a vacant seat on our Assembly, we held our first by-election in February 2022. With voting booths set up across the North East region and postal voting open, mob turned up to elect their newest Member.

The voting period was launched at our inaugural Treaty Day Out music concert in Shepparton. Eligible mob could even enrol and cast their vote at the event.

Treaty Day Out: Shepparton

Treaty Day Out brought more than 3,000 people to Yorta Yorta Country for a first class First Nations line-up, including Archie Roach, Briggs, Electric Fields, Mo'Ju, No Fixed Address, Alice Skye, Marlon X Rulla, Scott Darlow, Madi Colville Walker, Wulumbarra and Yothu Yindi.

The event sold out Shepparton and fulfilled ambitions of both increasing awareness of the Treaty process and promoting the Assembly's North East By-election. Treaty Day Out delivered an exponential increase in Assembly enrolments to kick off a hugely successful election period.



WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM COMMUNITY



TREATY NEGOTIATION FRAMEWORK

Hearing as many voices as we can on Community's vision for Treaty guides our work to establish Treaty Negotiation Framework.

The Framework will set up the core requirements and processes for Treaty negotiations.

Informed by what we hear, we are working towards a Framework that will identify subject matters and issues that are important to have on the table in future Treaty negotiations.

Community vision for Treaty

When asked what Treaty means to Community, we heard that Treaty is about:

- Self-determination and empowerment of our people, empowering us to live a good life
- Recognition of First Peoples, culture and Country
- Recognising past traumas and looking to the future
- An opportunity to support healing and creating places to heal and restore collectively through cultural practices, and sharing culture and history
- Traditional Owners and First Peoples in Victoria working together on their own terms, not on Government or whitefella terms.

Taking back control

The majority of people who took part in our Treaty Survey voiced their support for mob taking back control and decision-making power in our own affairs.

Over 95 per cent of Treaty Survey participants supported examples of changes to Government structures that could be possible under a statewide Treaty, of:

- A First Peoples' Parliament, a Black Parliament, elected by First Peoples to make decisions and pass and administer laws on issues that affect First Peoples.
- A First Peoples' Voice to the Victorian Parliament, which can give advice and input on any matters that affect First Peoples
- Dedicated First Peoples' seats in the Victorian Parliament
- Local government representation, through a dedicated seat or seats for nation/Tribal/clan/ Traditional Owner representatives on local council.

Matters to be negotiated under Treaties

Survey participants expressed support for First Peoples to make decisions over these different aspects of their lives under Treaties, and some shared their aspirations in these areas.

KNOWLEDGE AND DATA SOVEREIGNTY

EDUCATION

School curriculum concerning First Peoples' history
Education for all Victorians on truth-telling

WEALTH

Initiation of scheme for trusts for children
Prosperity planning
Business development and Community development

MONEY

Stolen Generations reparations scheme
Economic development and trade
Ability to choose where Government spends money
Assistance with home ownership

HEALING

Truth-telling
Reconnecting communities and connecting to culture
Fostering young mob to know who they are
Recognising cultural and spiritual healing practices
Trauma recovery

HEALTH

Aboriginal Community-Controlled Health Services
Mental health programs run our way
Therapies that will benefit mob

COUNTRY

Traditional relationships with land and waters
Buy-back scheme or land transfers
Land and water management /Caring for Country
Who are Traditional Owners of what Country
Managing Country

CHILDREN

Keeping children in home or Community
Education and early years

CULTURE

Cultural activities and expression
Cultural heritage
Revitalising our cultural knowledge systems
We need to focus on our healing through our culture, cultural programs, schools, healing centres
Young mob should be encouraged to learn culture

LANGUAGE

Teaching language in schools
Language revitalisation and resourcing
Dual naming in language

LAW AND JUSTICE

Aboriginal lore and law
Aboriginal justice system / youth detention options
Governance, independent accountability and review mechanisms

WHAT WE'VE HEARD FROM COMMUNITY

TREATY AUTHORITY

The Treaty Authority's guiding principles

"There should be a significant focus on Aboriginal ways of doing things, particularly the processes of communication, sharing knowledge and decision making." – Djirra

"If the Authority follows Lore then Elders will be the first in many ways to be heard and engaged with."

– Individual response to discussion paper



"Communication of the work of the Treaty Authority as it happens will be important to the First Peoples Community." – Individual response to discussion paper

Who is on the Treaty Authority

"Cultural expertise is a must and connection to Victorian Aboriginal community." – Individual response to discussion paper

"Honesty, integrity, equitable, competent, skilful and professional at the highest level." – Victorian Traditional Owners Land Justice Group



How the Treaty Authority is selected

"Elders should be closely involved and provide some insight and knowledge to the panel for the selection of individuals." – Individual response to discussion paper

SELF-DETERMINATION FUND

How the Fund can help create a level playing field in Treaty negotiations

"There is a need for two types of equality; firstly there must be some level of equity between Traditional Owner nations themselves, and secondly there must be equal standing between these nations and the Government with whom Treaty is being negotiated." – Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations

"The Fund can be directed to empower local groups to make decisions about their future that is relevant to their local circumstances." – Rumbalara Football & Netball Club + Dungala Kaiela Foundation



How the Fund can help build capacity, wealth and prosperity for First Peoples

"To best ensure our capacity, wealth and prosperity is built and maintained we must invest in ourselves first and foremost and support each other to grow and build ourselves up." – Kinaway Chamber of Commerce

How the Fund is managed

"Mob need to be in control of the money. If we have control, we can decide where to invest. We can invest in long term, proactive stuff that Governments won't fund." – Yarning Circle, Warrnambool, April 2021

"To be fair, a criteria needs to be developed to provide an open transparent process for agencies to apply for grants... This may include meaningful workshops and training for Community to increase their professional development and understanding." – Individual response to discussion paper

This is just a tiny snapshot of the wide range of views and ideas the Assembly heard. Members have then worked to distil the key themes and sentiments into the development of both the Fund and the Authority.

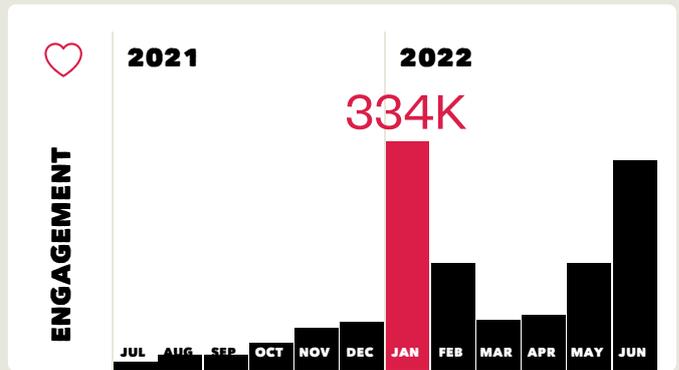
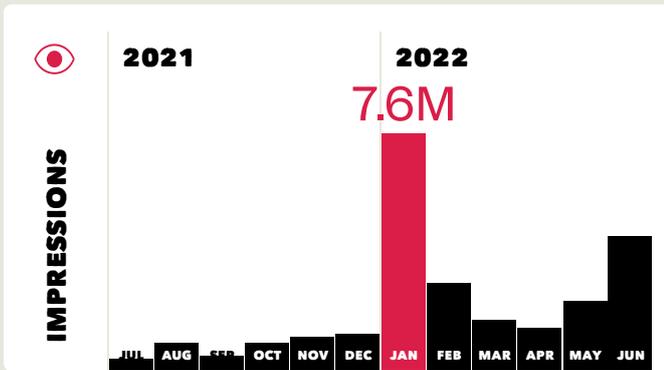
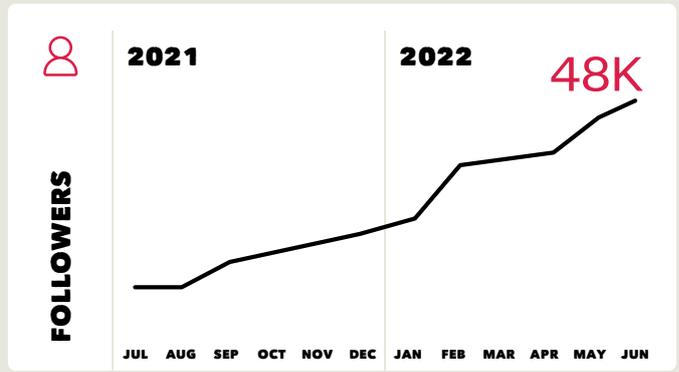
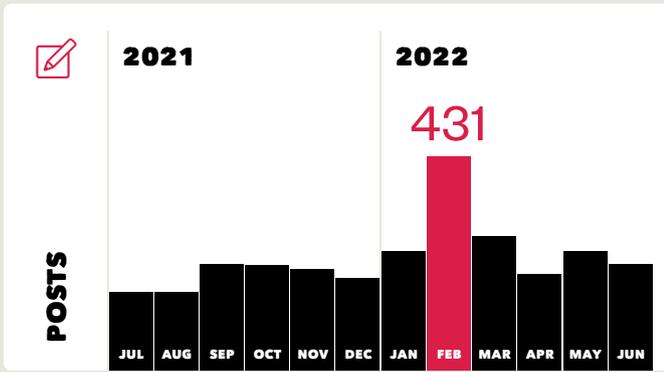
TREATY IS BIG NEWS



Over the past year we've featured in over **4,800 news articles**, across Victoria and nationally, reaching millions of people.

The collage consists of numerous social media posts from the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (@firstpeoplesvic). The posts are arranged in a grid-like fashion, overlapping slightly. They include:

- News articles:** Several posts feature snippets of news articles from various outlets, such as "Takes first change of government - adding Torres Strait Islands behind podium" and "North East by-election your votes have been counted!".
- Tweets:** Multiple tweets are included, such as "We're calling for the creation of a 'NAIDOC Day' public holiday" and "Oldest living culture in the world. And going strong".
- Event photos and videos:** Photos of community events, including a BBQ, a "Treaty Round" football match, and a "Walk with Wulumbarra".
- Community engagement:** Posts showing people at events, some wearing "Treaty for Victoria" t-shirts, and a "T-shirt Design Comp" with a \$1000 prize.
- Official announcements:** Posts from the Victorian Premier and other officials, such as "Huge thanks to North Melbourne FC for inviting Jhdara and OJ from our Engagement team out to talk Treaty!".
- Call to action:** Posts encouraging people to sign a petition for NAIDOC Day and to participate in the "Treaty Day Out" on February 26, 2022.



We are reaching more people through our social media channels and newsletters than ever before.

1200% ↑

Increase in reach over previous year

19M

Total impressions

32,762

New followers

We're live

The Assembly hosted seven Facebook Live events in the past year:

- Five Treaty Q&As at our Chamber Meetings
- Yothu Yindu performing 'Treaty' at Treaty Day Out
- Our Co-Chairs addressing media ahead of the Assembly's appearance at the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

Treaty to your inbox

Our digital updates are designed to keep our mob, allies and media in the know about what's happening at the Assembly. From just under 5,000 subscribers in June 2021, we now have more than 13,700 avid readers.

Photographing the journey

Thanks to the following photographers for their assistance throughout the year and taking many of the photographs featured in this report: Wayne Quilliam Aboriginal Photography, Kathy Chambers, Darcy de Silva, Blake Byron-Smith, Charles Pakana and James Henry.

“We have survived and thrived in all kinds of environments and continue to fight for our rights and our place in society. Treaty isn’t about us in the present, we need to be prepared for the next generation.” Dylan Clarke



“Victoria is the first and only jurisdiction to have actioned the Voice, Treaty and Truth elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. As a collective, the Assembly have worked hard to establish the foundations necessary to support future treaty negotiations in Victoria.” Ngarra Murray



“This is a significant step. I think it’s especially important in that it sets the tone for how Treaty can and should be – new innovative ways of doing things that empower First Nations people as decision makers.” Rueben Berg



“It’s so we can actually have true self-determination in what we want in life. This is what we would like to see, and this is the true history of this country.” Kaylene Williamson



“Stick with us. This is ground-breaking, innovative, nation-building work! We’re all very mindful about the presence the First Peoples’ Assembly has across Victoria and across the nation, and I’m doing my best to represent my people in a strong, authentic way in terms of the Treaty conversations.” Troy McDonald



“The Treaty Authority Agreement is another historic marker along the process for our people in negotiating their Treaties with the State Government and another step closer for the Assembly in achieving that goal.”
 Uncle Andrew Gardiner



“I am honoured to be an Assembly representative for the South-West and I look forward to continuing the work of building a strong Treaty framework, so that communities can be empowered to implement their own Treaty negotiations at the grass roots level. We have the wisdom and resilience of our Elders to thank for us being here today.”
 Aunty Charmaine Clarke



“I believe the Assembly is in a strong position to empower more of our communities to participate in the Treaty discussions and developments.”
 Uncle Michael 'Mookeye' Bell



“Victoria’s historic Treaty Authority agreement will set the direction for us as First Peoples to have a process in place that guarantees us equity at the Treaty negotiation table.”
 Muriel Bamblett



“I would like to see Aboriginal people experiencing the benefits of life-changing agreements, whether it be something in education, with more scholarships offered to all kids in school, or something for the Stolen Generations – it’s not much to ask. Stay true to the Treaty cause. We need you and we are all in this together.”
 Trevor Gallagher



“The Treaty will reinforce our status as Traditional Owners of our Country, it will give us a voice at the table and resources for us to assist our community members in need of support to reach their destiny.”
 Aunty Esmerelda Blambett



“You get to a point in your life where you want to make a difference and I see myself being a part of the systemic change for Australia and for Victoria.” Raylene Harradine



“We owe it to our ancestors and Elders, who have struggled for so long, and for our children and their children, to make this opportunity work. We need to use this process to emphasise our survival, our ownership of this land before the invasion, and of our continued presence and connection to the land.” Sean 'Waikarra' Fagan



“We’ve got through such a heavy policy load and I think we’ve achieved some fantastic things, and I hope that that’s provided a platform for us to take through the next couple of years and make some progress.” Matthew Burns



“Treaty is our future, so it’s really important that our young people’s voices, needs and hopes for the future are heard throughout our journey towards treaty.” Jordan Edwards



“Self-determination, cultural governance and embedding the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into the Assembly’s work and organisational culture was and still is the most critical work the Members have undertaken, and the mandate for the way the Assembly operates as an Aboriginal organisation right now and into the future.” Aunty Donna Wright



“For me, Treaty isn’t about the document or even the word Treaty. It is about ensuring our cultural and economic rights, our right to co-exist and ensuring Truth-Telling.”

Jason Kelly



“I believe that we can only achieve this as a collective and I know that it takes all of us to move forward. We have to invest in what we can do now and leave the legacy of a solid foundation for the future.”

Dr Carolyn Briggs AM



“This is our time to keep our culture strong and to lead the ways to continue our practices and to support the new leaders to care for Country and keep our traditions alive into the future.” Jacinta Chaplin

“It’s not just going to benefit blackfellas, it’s going to help all if we bridge this gap in misunderstanding. Walk with us and always be constructive. If there’s things to criticise, criticise, but be constructive with it.” Peter Hood



“I’m excited about reinvigorating what happens in the future around what a Treaty looks like.” Leanne Miller

“I acknowledge all our past strong Aboriginal leaders whose commitment provided this generation with this opportunity. The First Peoples’ Assembly is the culmination of years of tireless campaigning for sovereignty, self-determination, and recognition.” Alister Thorpe



“It’s part of our daily struggle, to be recognised as the First Peoples of this country, but a lot of non-Aboriginal people don’t know or don’t understand about that struggle. Hopefully Treaty will help them see that they should be proud that we’re still here and that we’re still practising our culture and that we want them to be part of that.” Trent Nelson



“When we as First Peoples and Traditional Owners of Victoria stand strong in culture and lore we give the loudest voice to our people.” Tracey Evans



“Remember a skin would be given to children when they were born and, as they grew, it would be added to with images, which helped tell the story of their life. The Assembly is something like a cloak. It’s at the birth of this Treaty process and the work it does on the framework, Treaty Authority and Self Determination Fund will help protect our groups as they negotiate Treaties.” Alice Pepper



“White Australia has the untold story of a Black History. It’s about time the Truth was told. It needs to be told. The real stories need to be told! And for our Aboriginal community. It’s time, it’s our time and it’s the right time.” Melissa Jones



“We’re doing business with the government so we’re always cautious when we’re doing that, so it’s important to keep perspective, but we’re looking forward to what the future can bring to our people.” Jamie Lowe



GET ENROLLED TO GET INVOLVED



Support Treaty and have your say

Treaty is about having the freedom and power to make the decisions that affect us and our Community – and that starts now.

Did you know?

Our electoral roll is exactly that – ours. It's made by Aboriginal people for Aboriginal people and is completely independent from Government.

You can enrol with the Assembly if you are 16 years old and over AND are either:

- A Victorian Traditional Owner (living in Victoria or anywhere in the world!)
- Or an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person from interstate who has lived in Victoria for at least three of the last five years.



HOW TO ENROL TO VOTE

You can enrol online or by posting an enrolment form to us. To enrol online or to download an enrolment form to send by post, head to:

→ firstpeoplesvic.org/enrol

You can also request for a printed enrolment form to be sent to you. If you'd like to request a printed enrolment form or need assistance with your enrolment, please contact:

📞 enrolment@firstpeoplesvic.org

✉️ **1800 TREATY (1800 873 289)**



Those of our mob who are currently incarcerated in Victoria are also eligible to enrol via post.



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