

First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria

FRIENDS OF **TREATY** FOR VICTORIA



FIRST PEOPLES'
ASSEMBLY OF
VICTORIA





When it comes to Aboriginal communities, cultures and lands, the experts are of course Aboriginal people — The more this fact is respected and embraced, the more our communities will thrive.

The past can't be changed, but we can choose to build a better future together as equals. One everyone can be proud of.

To create a better future, we need everyone to recognise that while the murder and dispossession inflicted on Aboriginal people happened in the past, it continues to cause ongoing harm, disadvantage, and discrimination today.

That's why we need to negotiate a better deal through Treaty.

Treaty will provide Aboriginal communities with the power to develop and deliver practical solutions at a local level.

When our communities are thriving again and we're strong and proud in our cultures and languages, we all benefit.

We want everyone who calls Victoria home, to be able to share in, celebrate and benefit from the wisdom and knowledge that our cultures and languages have to offer.

Will you help us make this vision a reality?

Walk with us by being part of our Friends of Treaty program.





BACKGROUND

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is the representative body for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Victoria.



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In 2019, 32 Traditional Owners of Country were elected by their communities to the Assembly – they were tasked to yarn with mob right across the state and create a process for negotiating Treaties.

Having reached agreement with the Victorian Government about a framework for Treaty negotiations and holding its second round of elections, the new group of Assembly Members is now getting ready to enter Treaty negotiations.

We want Aboriginal communities to have the power and tools to develop and deliver practical solutions at a local level.

That's why the negotiation framework allows the various Traditional Owners across the state to negotiate Treaties that reflect the priorities and aspirations in their areas.

In addition to Traditional Owner Treaties, the Assembly will negotiate a statewide Treaty with the Government.

A TREATY FUTURE



The different Traditional Owner Treaties will reflect different priorities and aspirations specific to each area. But the underlying principle is that Aboriginal people should be making the decisions when it comes to Aboriginal matters. **Nothing about us, without us.**

This means the focus is on transferring decision-making power from Government back to First Peoples.

The Assembly is still gathering ideas and feedback from our communities about the Statewide Treaty, but we now have key concepts we'll likely take into the first round of Treaty negotiations later this year.

We'll be looking to agree on a process and timetable for transferring decision-making powers about Aboriginal matters from the Government to the Assembly.

- We'll want to **expand the Assembly's roles and responsibilities**, so that in addition to the new decision-making powers we'd be seeking, it could also **provide advice to government** on a range of issues that affect First Peoples and **ensure accountability** for promises made and standards set.
- We will seek to find ways to ensure First Peoples' **cultures and languages are recognised and respected.**
- And of course, we'll be looking at how key recommendations from the **Yoorrook Justice Commission's** truth-telling process should be implemented.

WHERE YOU COME IN

The Victorian Government is committed to negotiating Treaty, but the scope and strength of what Treaty delivers will likely be influenced by the political appetite the Government has for bold reforms.

At the end of the day, public opinion matters.

As Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up just 2–3% of the population, we need your help to show there is support for Treaty.

It's important that allies share why Treaty is something they support and explain the benefits everyone gains.

This briefing document outlines ways ally organisations can walk with us and build public support for Treaty.

A FOUR STEP PLAN TAKE THE PLEDGE

We're asking for ally organisations to make a public pledge to commit to four overarching principles.

COLLABORATE

Collaboration is about working closely with First Peoples' communities, stakeholders, and partners to ensure that their voices are heard, and their needs are met. It involves building meaningful relationships, engaging in open dialogue, and finding common ground to support the Treaty process and other related initiatives. Collaboration is key to fostering trust and achieving shared goals.

EDUCATE

Education involves increasing awareness and understanding of First Peoples' cultures, histories, and the Treaty process. This includes providing training and capacity-building opportunities for staff, promoting cultural exchange programs, and supporting cross-cultural learning. By educating both internal and external audiences, organisations can create an environment of respect and inclusivity, while empowering First Peoples' communities with the knowledge and skills needed to participate in the Treaty process.

ADVOCATE

Advocacy is about publicly supporting the rights of First Peoples and promoting the implementation of Treaty commitments. It encompasses endorsing and promoting the negotiation of Treaties with state governments, raising awareness about the importance of treaties, and pushing for policy reforms that benefit First Peoples. Advocacy plays a critical role in driving change and ensuring that the rights of First Peoples are recognised and upheld. It can also help explain why it's everyone's interest to make Treaty a reality.

ACTIVATE

Activation is the process of turning commitments into concrete actions. It involves implementing measures that bring about tangible change, such as co-naming or renaming buildings to honour First Peoples' names, establishing mechanisms for accountability, and allocating resources to support First Peoples' organisations. Activation demonstrates a commitment to making a real impact and holding stakeholders accountable for their promises

HOW TO MAKE THE PLEDGE

It's important that any organisation wanting to pledge themselves as a Friend of Treaty makes the steps internally as an organisation to determine capacity to meet commitments.

We ask that your organisation looks beyond mere tokens of support – examine the types of commitments we outline further below in this document and assess how your organisation can maximise its activities.

Here's a guide on how to approach:

1 Internal Discussion and Alignment: Begin by initiating internal discussions among key staff members within your organisation. This may include executives, board members, employees, and relevant committees. Ensure that there is alignment and consensus on the organisation's commitment to supporting the Treaty processes.

2 Seeking Input and Feedback: Before finalising your organisation's commitments, seek input and feedback from First Peoples' staff within your organisation and other relevant stakeholders. This ensures that the pledge is respectful, inclusive, and aligned with the priorities and perspectives of First Peoples. Incorporate any feedback received into your planned commitments.

If your organisation doesn't have First Peoples staff or committees and you're struggling to find relevant input or feedback – this is where you can reach out to the Assembly directly.

3 Drafting the Pledge: At the end of this document is a suggested draft pledge. However – your organisation may wish to develop their own pledge/statement that speaks with your own authentic voice and perspective, but that still outlines your organisation's commitment to supporting the Treaty processes. The pledge should articulate the organisation's values, goals, and specific actions it intends to take to support Treaty negotiations. Consider including elements such as advocacy, resource allocation, capacity building, community engagement, policy support, monitoring, and cultural exchange, as outlined in the guideline commitments below.

4 Implementation Plan: Develop an implementation plan that outlines how the organisation will fulfil its pledge commitments, and assess how this may interact with, or be covered by, your Reconciliation Action Plan. This may include specific initiatives, timelines, responsible parties, and ways to monitor progress.

5 Check back with the Assembly: Once you've developed your plan - check back in with the First Peoples' Assembly – talk us through your plan so we can ensure it is meeting expectations.

6 Formal Approval: Present the draft pledge to your organisation's leadership or governing body for formal approval. Ensure that there is buy-in from all relevant decision-makers within the organisation.

7 Public Declaration: Once approved, publicly declare the organisation's pledge to support the Treaty processes. This can be done through various channels, such as press releases, social media announcements, website statements, and internal communications to employees and stakeholders.

8 Visibility: We want to see your commitment! Make plans to maximise the visibility of your support for Treaty. This could include things such as including the announcement in internal/external newsletters, a website footer, posters at your workplaces, or a line in your staff email signatures about your organisation supporting Treaty in Victoria.

9 Briefing your staff: You may have already consulted with your staff during the process – but your organisation should consider the importance of a briefing session with staff to outline the kinds of commitments your organisation is making.

10 Evaluation and Reporting: Regularly evaluate the organisation's progress in fulfilling its pledge commitments and report on outcomes, achievements, and challenges. The Assembly will seek to compile annual summary-reports from each organisation that has formally pledged its support for Treaty.

11 Continual Improvement: Commit to continual improvement and adaptation based on feedback, lessons learned, and evolving circumstances. Regularly review and update the organisation's approach to supporting the Treaty processes to ensure relevance and effectiveness over time.

HOW THE PLEDGE INTERACTS WITH A RECONCILIATION ACTION PLAN

Your organisation likely already has a Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP).

It will be important to assess how your RAP may already be contributing to the kinds of commitments this pledge asks your organisation to make.

Importantly, this pledge does not supersede a RAP. Instead, it is a formal commitment to support the Treaty process, with tangible actions, that is recognised by the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

COMMITMENTS AND ACTIONS

Review the table below and assess which commitments you have capacity to make.

While there are no mandatory actions – the expectation is, if possible, your organisation should be committing to at least one action across the 4 key categories that we ask Ally Organisations to try and encompass in their pledge - Collaborate - Educate - Advocate – Activate

We ask Ally Organisations to review the table below and assess which commitments you have capacity to make. While there are no mandatory actions – the expectation is, if possible, your organisation should be committing to at least one action across the 4 key categories that we ask Ally Organisations to try and encompass in their pledge - Collaborate - Educate - Advocate – Activate

Please note that this list is not exhaustive – there may be other actions or ideas that you have that fit under the 4 main concepts

COLLABORATE

Community Engagement and Consultation

- Support initiatives that facilitate meaningful dialogue and collaboration between First Peoples and non-Indigenous stakeholders.
- Actively engage the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria in consultation or feedback for policy/planning.

Connecting your First Peoples staff with the Assembly

The First Peoples Assembly is always wanting to build our electoral role and increase our connections with First Peoples' across Victoria.

Resource Allocation

Provide in-kind resources such as meeting spaces, equipment, and expertise to support First Peoples organisations or Traditional Owners involved in the Treaty process.

Add your organisation to a register to provide pro-bono support

Ally Organisations who provide particular services may be interested in providing pro-bono support such as legal, communications, or administration services to Traditional Owner Groups during their Treaty negotiations.

The Assembly will be building a register of organisations that indicate their capacity to provide pro-bono support.

EDUCATE

Capacity Building and Training

- Provide training and capacity-building opportunities for staff members to increase their understanding of First Peoples' issues, Treaty negotiations, and cultural competency.
- Offer support for First Peoples communities to develop skills and knowledge necessary for effective participation in the Treaty process.
- If you are a member organisation, such as a Union, commit to educating your members on the importance of Treaty.

Cultural Exchange and Education

- Promote cultural exchange programs and educational initiatives that celebrate First Peoples cultures, traditions, and knowledge systems.
- Support initiatives that promote cross-cultural understanding and respect, fostering a culture of inclusivity and appreciation.

ADVOCATE

Advocacy and Shows of Public Support

- Publicly endorse and advocate for the negotiation and implementation of Treaty with the state government.
- Raise awareness about the importance of Treaty and the rights of First Peoples through internal/external communication channels.
- Help promote relevant Treaty events by the Assembly or Traditional Owner groups.

Visibility

Maximise the visibility of your support for Treaty. Make your announcement in internal/external newsletters, website footers, posters at your workplaces, or a line in your staff email signatures about your organisation supporting Treaty in Victoria.

Your comms teams should have good ideas about how you can maximise visibility.

Answer the call

Commit to backing the Assembly at key moments. This might involve public statements, supporting and promoting campaigns or lobbying the Government on key aspects of Treaty.

Policy and Legal Support

Advocate for policy reforms and legislative changes that promote the recognition of First Peoples' rights and facilitate the implementation of Treaty commitments.

Writing to MP's and Ministers

As the Assembly enters negotiations later this year, it will be important for Ally organisations to remind the government of the widespread support that Treaty has in Victoria. Writing to key MP's, Ministers and the Premier will be important in keeping Government on track to delivering outcomes. *See page 14 for suggested wording and recipients.*

ACTIVATE

Co-naming/Renaming

Co-name or rename your organisations buildings, rooms, or locations to honour First Peoples' names and languages.

Monitoring and Accountability

- Establish mechanisms for monitoring the implementation of Treaty and holding the state government accountable for its commitments.
- Collect data, conduct evaluations, and report on the progress and impact of Treaty.

Resource Allocation

Allocate financial resources to donate and support the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

Note: The Assembly does not have a list of preferred providers when it comes to things like education or training. We encourage organisations to connect with local providers, that may have relationships with the Traditional Owners of the areas in which your workplaces reside.

Acknowledgement of Country

Include a final line of solidarity as part of your organisations Acknowledgement of Country. For example:

"I would also like to pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and Aboriginal Elders of other communities who may be here today. [Organisation X] supports Treaty for Victoria."

ACCOUNTABILITY

In order to ensure some basic accountability mechanisms, the Assembly will be asking Ally Organisations that have signed the pledge to provide a short (200-400 words) annual summary, reporting back on how you are tracking on your commitments. The Assembly will look to publish a summary of these annual updates on our website.

The Assembly will also seek to hold half yearly report-back sessions for organisations, where the Assembly can update you on how Treaty negotiations are progressing, and to update everyone on where your organisation is tracking in meeting or exceeding commitments.

NOW IT'S OVER TO YOU

By adhering to these guidelines, organisations can play a significant role in supporting the shared journey to Treaty in Victoria

Together, we can build a future where First Peoples and allies work together, guided by the principles of equality, respect, collaboration, and cultural appreciation.

THE PLEDGE

It's time to tell the world where you stand on Treaty. You may wish to draft your own pledge but feel free to use the below template as a guide.

We, [Organisation X] are proud to acknowledge the [X people], Traditional Owners of the lands where we do our work/across Victoria. [Can include mention of what that work is]. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and remember that sovereignty was never ceded.

As an organisation firmly committed to advancing social justice and equality, we want to play our part in righting the wrongs of the past and be part of creating a better future together.

With profound respect for the sovereignty, culture, and rights of First Peoples, we're pleased to announce that we will walk with the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria on the journey to Treaty.

We recognise that when it comes to First Peoples communities, cultures and lands, the experts are of course First Peoples.

The past can't be changed, but we can choose to take steps today that will help heal the ongoing pain caused by the injustices of yesterday.

We believe a better tomorrow is possible and [Organisation X] pledges our unwavering support to the First Peoples' Treaty process in Victoria.

To help build support for the shared journey to Treaty, we will:

[Outline some steps as per above – try and include something from each main category]

By making this pledge, we affirm our commitment to the self-determination of First Peoples in Victoria as they assert their rights, tell their truths, and chart a path towards, and healing through, Treaty-making.

Together, we will create a future where First Peoples' voices are heard, rights are respected, and justice is realised for generations to come.



LETTERS TO THE STATE GOVERNMENT

It will be important to target key MP's and Ministers.

We suggest sending any letters to government that advocate for Treaty to be sent to the Premier, Minister for Treaty, Attorney General, Treasurer, and the local MP where your main offices are located.

If your organisation already has a good working relationship with specific Government Ministers or MP's, then this is also someone that should be included in any letters.

The timing of any letters is key – considering sending this letter in conjunction with key announcements for example: the Yoorrook Justice Commission handing down key recommendations, or Governments announcements about Treaty.

Key points we suggest including:

- Underscore that your organisation is committed to supporting Treaty in Victoria.
- It's important that your organisations draft a letter that is deeply authentic and speaks to themes that are relevant to the work and expertise of your organisation.
- That your organisation is actively encouraging your staff/members/customers/clients to come on the journey towards Treaty.
- That you support the Governments commitment to the Treaty process and look forward to seeing the Government listening to the voices of First Peoples during negotiations.
- To remind the Government that your organisation is closely watching the outcomes of the Treaty process and are ready to support the First Peoples's Assembly of Victoria, and Traditional Owner Groups, in achieving the best possible outcomes.
- It doesn't hurt to flex – lets remind the Government about the reach, connections, and power your organisation holds to help build support for Treaty.

WALK WITH US



FOLLOW



FIRST PEOPLES'
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VICTORIA

