

# TREATY FOR VICTORIA





**STRONG**

**FEARLESS**

**TOGETHER**

## WE PAY OUR RESPECTS

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 shared journey to Treaty.

We acknowledge that the past year has been an immensely tough one for our Community, with Sorry Business being practised across the State. We pay tribute to the staunch trailblazers as well as the young leaders who have passed on.



**FIRST PEOPLES'  
ASSEMBLY OF  
VICTORIA**

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that the following publication may contain images of deceased persons.

Thanks to the photographers and artists for their assistance throughout the year and taking many of the photographs and artwork featured in this report:

Leroy Miller, Amina Briggs, Matthew Kidd

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### Preparing for Statewide Treaty

Treaty is about providing Aboriginal communities with the power to come up with and deliver practical solutions at a local level – from improving the way services like health and education are delivered to using local knowledge to care for land and keep culture strong.

Traditional Owner Treaties across Victoria will make sure local knowledge can inform decision-making at a community level. Meanwhile a Statewide Treaty will strengthen the First Peoples' Assembly so it can drive positive structural change to improve the lives of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in Victoria.

The official negotiations for Statewide Treaty will start before the end of 2024 – check out the key concepts that are already taking form.

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## 14 COMMUNITY SETS THE AGENDA

This year has been all about listening to Community. The elected Assembly Members and our engagement team have been out having the yarns and gatherings across the whole state. We've held over 800 events, made over 5,000 phone calls, run surveys, and held various community forums to hear about the needs and shared aspirations about Treaty.



## 24 GETTING TREATY READY

Alongside the Assembly's negotiation of a Statewide Treaty, Traditional Owner groups will be able to negotiate Treaties that reflect aspirations and priorities specific to their Country. And our Self-Determination Fund is up and running – providing financial support to help them prepare! Find out what's available.

# We're ready for Treaty. Are you?

Rueben Berg & Ngarra Murray, Co-chairs  
First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria



## HEY MOB!

We've had the great honour of being the Co-chairs of the Assembly for just over a year now.

It's been a learning experience, but an incredibly rewarding one and we're very proud to provide this report on everything that's been accomplished – with your deadly guidance!

**This last year has been all about listening to Community.**

Along with all the elected Assembly Members and our engagement team, we've been out having the yarns and gatherings across the whole state. Collecting the ideas, hearing about the needs, hopes and shared aspirations about what life with Treaty will look like and how you want it to help improve the lives of our people.

From our big Statewide Treaty Gathering to the many regional ones. From flagship events like

Treaty Day Out to the many intimate yarning circles we've put on – the most important thing to us, has been making sure Community has plenty of opportunities to stay up to date with the work and plans of the Assembly and that people know they can always have their say.

**No matter how big or small, every contribution we receive from community members will help shape Treaty and our future.**

Working with all of the elected Assembly Members, we've started to distil the ideas into key concepts and identify common priorities that we can take into Treaty negotiations (you'll find more info on those in the coming pages).

There's one consistent thread in all that we hear.

It's clear to us that we need to put decision-making power back in the hands of our mobs.

That is our guiding principle.

**When it comes to First Peoples' matters – whether it be our cultures, our sacred sites and heritage, our languages, our lands and waters, our communities – the experts are of course First Peoples.**

This is why the Treaty Negotiation Framework seeks to empower our communities with the power and tools to come up with practical solutions at a local level.

**Traditional Owners will be able to negotiate Treaties that reflect the priorities and aspirations on their Country. And they can now access support from our Self-Determination Fund to start preparing for that process.**

Meanwhile, the Assembly is gearing up to negotiate a Statewide Treaty to tackle big picture structural reform at a statewide level. We've notified the Treaty Authority – the

independent umpire in the process – that we're ready to sit down with the Premier and start negotiating this Statewide Treaty.

So now, more than ever, we're going to need more of your ideas and feedback.

**And mostly importantly, we're going to need your support. We need you to keep the fire burning!**

In the Assembly, our mobs have staunch advocates that will do them proud. And when we all stick together and speak with a united voice, we are strong and we are deadly.

So yes, we've had a year packed with many cups of tea over hundreds of yarns, but we know there are many more to come – and we're looking forward to it!

Whether you're an Elder, a young fulla or someone who's passionate about our people, we're confident you have a role to play in this Treaty we're making.

*Wurruk* — Rueben Berg  
*Booyen* — Ngarra Murray



## THE YEAR THAT WAS



## GETTING TREATY DONE

- 
**Yarning with Community**  
 We hosted another jam-packed program of events and forums with Community all over the state so mob could share ideas and feedback.
- 
**Democracy in action**  
 The newly elected Assembly Members chose new leadership following the historic statewide Treaty elections. Ngarra Murray and Rueben Berg were appointed Co-chairs.
- 
**Harnessing the wisdom of Elders**  
 A group of esteemed Elders was appointed to help guide the journey, keep us culturally strong, and provide wisdom in the upcoming Treaty negotiations.

### ✓ Sharing the resources

The Self-Determination Fund is up and running and providing funding to Traditional Owners wanting to start preparations for Treaty negotiations on their Country.

### ✓ Growing our electoral roll

We kept growing our own First Peoples electoral roll that is completely independent from Government – over 8,000 strong have enrolled to have their say in Assembly elections!

### ✓ Putting young mob in the frame

Youth forums continue to bring young mob together so they can develop their aspirations for Treaty and have a say in their own future.

### ✓ Treaty Authority grounded in culture

The Treaty Authority – that will oversee negotiations and help resolve any disputes that may arise – opened and the inaugural ‘umpires’ got to work.

### ✓ Mob organising mob

Wamba Wemba people utilised the Assembly’s pathway for Traditional Owner groups to get recognition and a seat at the Assembly.

### ✓ Show of strength and culture

The Statewide Gathering in Geelong and ongoing regional gatherings are giving everyone a chance to get informed and have their say ahead of negotiations.

### ✓ Truth-telling at Yoorrook

Assembly Members continue to help the Yoorrook Justice Commission’s Truth-telling process. Building on work about systemic injustice within Victoria’s child protection and criminal justice systems, the inquiry has turned its focus to important topics such as land justice, economic inclusion, health, housing and education.

### ✓ Bringing more people on the journey

Treaty Day Out headed to Wadawurrung Country with Jessica Mauboy to headline a sold-out show in Ballarat for over 3,500 mob and allies.

## NEXT STEPS

### Design a future Assembly

Finalise a vision for an enhanced version of the Assembly with strong decision-making powers and expanded roles and responsibilities – so we can hold government to account, provide advice, and perform ceremonial duties.



### Let the world know we are ready

Show the Treaty Authority that the Assembly meets the standards set by the Framework and we are ready to start negotiating.



### Sit down with Victorian Government

Commence formal Treaty negotiations between the Assembly and Government for a Statewide Treaty.



### Empowering our communities

Keep providing practical assistance to Traditional Owner groups as they prepare their own Treaty claims.

## MEET THE ASSEMBLY



# By mob, for mob

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is the democratically elected body to represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on the journey to Treaty in Victoria.

Thirty-three Traditional Owners of Country have been chosen by their communities to represent their mobs' needs and aspirations.

It's their job to listen to Community and work out ways to distil all the deadly ideas and feedback into a united vision of what Treaty can deliver to improve the lives of our people. Then – it's time to advocate and negotiate to make Treaty a reality!



## Decision-making in action

All of the Assembly Members meet together in person throughout the year. There's also regular committee, Council, and working groups in between Assembly Meetings.

### ASSEMBLY MEETINGS

- July '23** Melbourne Naarm Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country
- Sept '23** Bendigo Dja Dja Wurrung Country
- Nov '23** San Remo Bunurong Country
- Mar '24** Lakes Entrance Gunaikurnai Country
- Jun '24** Portland Gunditjmara Country

Assembly Members represent communities across five regions that cover Victoria:



## METRO



**ALISTER THORPE**  
Gunai, Yorta Yorta, Gunditjmara and Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung



**AUNTY ESME BAMBLETT**  
Bangerang, Taungurung and Wiradjuri



**GNERICK GNERICK GARY MURRAY**  
Dhudhuroa, Yorta Yorta, Barapa Barapa, Dja Dja Wurrung, Wamba Wamba, Wergaia, Wiradjeri and Waywurru



**INDI CLARKE**  
Wamba Wamba, Mutti Mutti, Boon Wurrung, Trawoolway and Lardil



**NERITA WAIGHT**  
Yorta Yorta and Narrandjeri



**NGARRA MURRAY**  
Wamba Wamba, Yorta Yorta, Dhudhuroa and Dja Dja Wurrung



**UNCLE SHANE CHARLES**  
Wurundjeri, Boon Wurrung and Yorta Yorta



**TROY AUSTIN**  
Gunditjmara



**TRACEY EVANS**  
Gunditjmara and Bundjalung



**BARRY FIREBRACE-BRIGGS**  
Yorta Yorta and Ulupna



**UNCLE ANDREW GARDINER**  
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Reserved Seat holder representing Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation



**ZOE UPTON**  
Bunurong and Trawoolway Reserved Seat holder representing Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation



### Recognition for Wamba Wamba

Self-determination is all about doing things our way. We won't be constrained by government systems or colonial thinking. That's why the Assembly created a pathway for Traditional Owner groups who do not have formal recognition under legislation to apply for a seat on the Assembly. This means groups no longer need to rely on the protracted government process of becoming a 'Recognised Aboriginal Party' to have a seat at the Treaty table. **Mob will decide who mob is.**

In March 2024, Assembly Members voted to accept a request from Wamba Wamba peoples – Traditional

Owners of Country in North-West Victoria – for the creation of a new seat on the Assembly. It was a historic moment that paves the way for other groups without official recognition.

In June, Wamba Wamba woman Lowana Moore, was officially appointed as the Assembly's 33rd Member following the Wamba Wamba Aboriginal Corporation's election process.

## NORTH WEST



**JACINTA CHAPLIN**  
*Wadi Wadi and Wamba Wamba*



**RODNEY CARTER**  
*Dja Dja Wurrung*



**LOWANA MOORE**  
*Wamba Wamba*  
Reserved Seat Holder for Wamba  
Wamba Aboriginal Corporation



**DJARAN MURRAY-JACKSON**  
*Dja Dja Wurrung, Wamba Wamba, Yorta Yorta, Dhudhuroa, Waywuru, Barapa Barapa, Wergaia and Wiradjuri*  
Reserved Seat holder representing  
Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation



**JASON KELLY**  
*Mutthi Mutthi and Wamba Wamba*



**MELISSA JONES**  
*Latje Latje and Jupagulk*  
Reserved Seat holder representing  
First People of the Millewa Mallee  
Aboriginal Corporation



**DYLAN CLARKE**  
*Wotjobaluk, Jaadwajali, Jadwaa, Wergaia and Jupagulk*  
Reserved Seat holder representing  
Barengi Gadjin Land Council  
Aboriginal Corporation



**BELINDA BRIGGS**  
*Yorta Yorta, Wamba Wamba*



**LEVI POWER**  
*Yorta Yorta*



**NICOLE ATKINSON**  
*Bangerang and Gunditjmarra*



**MATTHEW BURNS**  
*Taungurung*  
Reserved Seat holder representing  
Taungurung Land and Waters Council  
Aboriginal Corporation

## NORTH EAST

## SOUTH WEST



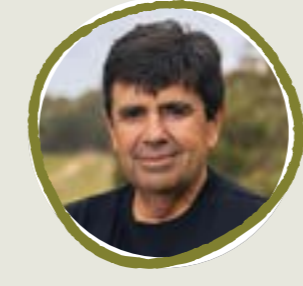
**AUNTY DONNA WRIGHT**  
*Kerrupmara, Nillaan, Gunditjmarra, Dhauwurd wurrung, Djab wurrung, Kamilaroi*  
Reserved Seat holder representing  
Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners  
Aboriginal Corporation



**JORDAN EDWARDS**  
*Gunditjmarra, Waddawurrung and Arrente*



**RUEBEN BERG**  
*Gunditjmarra*  
Reserved Seat holder representing  
Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation



**UNCLE MICHAEL 'MOOKEYE' BELL**  
*Gunditjmarra and Boandik*

## SOUTH EAST



**ALICE PEPPER**  
*Gunnai, Yorta Yorta, Mutti Mutti, Gunditjmarra and Arrente*



**BRIAN STEVENS**  
*Gunnai*



**PETER HOOD**  
*Kurnai*



**TROY MCDONALD**  
*Gunaikurnai*  
Reserved Seat holder representing  
Gunaikurnai Land and Waters  
Aboriginal Corporation

# BY MOB FOR MOB



**DIVERSE IDEAS, COLLECTIVE STRENGTH**

# Community sets the agenda

It's been a busy and fulfilling year for the Assembly Members and engagement team. We've travelled across the state, yarning with mob about their ideas, feedback and aspirations for Treaty.

After the 2023 Treaty Elections, our new Members hit the ground running, with 'Meet the Members' forums in each region. Since then, we've had numerous community engagement events – from Elders gatherings to youth forums and everything in between.

These events and conversations are so important because they create the foundations for our Members to confidently negotiate what Community wants to see in a Statewide Treaty.

But it's not all serious business – we also love bringing mob together to have a feed, have a dance, play some games and celebrate our deadly culture.





## SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS...



### Statewide Treaty Gathering

One of our flagship events was the Statewide Treaty Gathering. It was a big few days on Wadawurrung Country in Geelong as we yarned with Community about the next steps in the Treaty journey; received feedback on how our negotiation plans are shaping up; and listened to Community's ideas and aspirations. The event included cultural activities, speeches, presentations, QandA sessions, breakout groups and guest experts from across the country and abroad to share their experiences.

### Regional Treaty Gatherings

Hot on the heels of the Statewide Gathering, the team held a series of similar events in each of the Assembly's five regions. Every community has different aspirations and ideas, and we want to ensure these are all taken on board.

We understand not everyone can travel, and that shouldn't stop anyone having their say on Treaty matters. We'll continue holding yarns across the state, in all different locations, at every stage of the journey.

### Online surveys and feedback

We also ensure mob can provide their feedback and ideas in a range of different ways. Our 1800 TREATY (1800 873 289) phone line is open, our engagement team are always up for a 1-on-1 or group yarn, and approximately 800 people completed our big mob survey this year.

### Youth and Elders Forums

In addition to events specifically for youth and events specifically for Elders, this year we also brought them together for some great events in the North West region. It was a great chance for our young mob to share their thoughts about Treaty and hear the stories and wisdom of our Elders.

### Treaty Day Out Ballarat

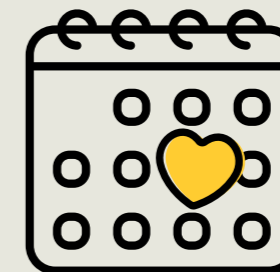
Our incredible all-star First Nations concerts always draw a crowd, but these events are about more than just the music! In addition to the cultural activities; the engagement and Members tent allow mob to have a yarn about Treaty in a more casual setting. (Check out the Treaty Day Out spread near the end of this report!)



Treaty is about directly empowering Aboriginal Communities with the ability and tools to come up with practical solutions at a local level.



**21,572**  
EVENT ATTENDEES



**802**  
ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

**65K**  
TEXT MESSAGES  
**5.8K**  
CALLS



**24**  
VISITS TO MOB  
IN PRISON



**17**  
SCHOOL  
ENGAGEMENTS



**↑ 16%**  
INCREASE IN OUR  
ELECTORAL ROLE

## WHAT DOES TREATY MEAN TO YOU?

"TREATY MEANS A SENSE OF BELONGING AND RESPECT FOR PEOPLE, CULTURE AND COUNTRY."

"AN OPPORTUNITY TO ADVANCE SELF DETERMINATION AND TAKE BACK CONTROL OF OUR LIVES AND COMMUNITIES."



"IT'S AN IMPORTANT STEP, ESPECIALLY THE TRUTH TELLING PROCESS. AFTER THE REFERENDUM, I LOST HOPE. BUT NOW, WITH TREATY COMING ALONG SO FAR IN VICTORIA, I FEEL LIKE MY CULTURE, MY FAMILY & MYSELF COULD BE RECOGNISED & RESPECTED."

"TO BE RECOGNISED AS A FIRST PEOPLES WHO HAVE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AS EVERYONE ELSE DOES. TO HELP CLOSE THE HEALTH GAP AND TO EMPOWER OUR MOB TO HAVE CHOICE WHEN IT COMES TO SERVICE ACCESS."

"IT MAKES ME FEEL HOPEFUL AND EXCITED FOR MOB IN VICTORIA AND FOR GENERATIONS TO COME."

"IT HOPEFULLY MEANS BETTERING FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES LIVES INCLUDING HEALTH CARE AND THOSE WRONGFULLY IN PRISON. IT MEANS PREVENTING CULTURAL GENOCIDE AND STOLEN GENERATIONS."

"TREATY MEANS NEGOTIATING WHAT IS BEST FOR US IN OUR OWN TERMS."



"IT MEANS HEALING. IT MEANS INCLUSION. IT MEANS RESPECT. IT MEANS BELONGING. IT MEANS HAVING A SAY IN OUR OWN FUTURE AND KNOWING THAT WE ARE VALUED MEMBERS OF THIS SOCIETY, AND THAT WE ACTUALLY DO MATTER! IT MEANS VICTORY, AGAINST THE RACISTS IN THIS COUNTRY WHO SAY THAT WE DON'T BELONG."

"ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND RESPECT. A SEAT AT THE TABLE."

"HOLDING GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE FOR THEIR ACTIONS AGAINST FRIST NATIONS PEOPLES."

"MAKES ME FEEL AS THOUGH I'M ACTUALLY ACKNOWLEDGED IN MY OWN COUNTRY."

"TREATY IS A WAY OF ENSURING PROGRESS AND BETTER STANDARD OF LIVING FOR OUR YOUNG MOB."





**TREATY**

**NOW**

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“Let’s put real and meaningful decision-making power into Aboriginal hands.”

Ngarra Murray

### Preparing for Statewide Treaty

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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!

That’s why we’ve created a Treaty Negotiation Framework that embeds self-determination into the Treaty process and will provide Aboriginal communities with the power to come up with and deliver practical solutions at a local level.

Traditional Owner Treaties across Victoria will make sure local knowledge can inform decision-making at a community level. Meanwhile a Statewide Treaty will expand and strengthen the First Peoples’ Assembly so it can drive positive structural change to improve the lives of Aboriginal people.

# KEY CONCEPTS OF STATEWIDE TREATY

The elected Assembly Members are still developing their negotiating brief, so more ideas and details will likely be added, but some key concepts are already taking form.

## DECISION-MAKING POWERS



We want a process and timeline for providing the Assembly with real decision-making powers on First Peoples matters. That way it will be mob making decisions about mob.

## GUIDANCE AND ADVICE



When decisions aren't primarily about mob, but still impact us, we want the Assembly to be able to ensure that Victorian Government Ministers and the public service get advice directly from First Peoples.

## ACCOUNTABILITY AND SCRUTINY



We want the power to hold the Victorian Government to account for its promises and the ability to scrutinise policies, practices and services to make sure they are up to scratch and delivering for mob.

## YOORROOK TRUTH-TELLING RECOMMENDATIONS



We want agreement on how (and when) key recommendations from the Yoorrook Justice Commission's Truth-telling process will be implemented on a range of topics such as justice, health, housing, education, child protection, land justice, and economic inclusion.

## RECOGNISING AND CELEBRATING OUR CULTURES



We want to make sure our languages and cultures are properly respected. Everyone who calls Victoria home should have an opportunity to deepen their connection to and understanding of First Peoples' languages and cultures.



We've been actively excluded from the economic benefits derived from our lands, so we want the opportunity to also create wealth and prosperity that we can pass down to future generations.



## Self-Determination Fund and Traditional Owner Treaties

Alongside the Assembly's negotiation of a Statewide Treaty that covers 'big picture' reforms, the Assembly will also support Traditional Owner Groups to negotiate Treaties that reflect aspirations and priorities specific to their Country.

**The Self-Determination Fund is up and running. It provides financial support to help Traditional Owners come together to explore and form their aspirations for Treaty.**

How Traditional Owners choose to do that will vary. The funding is flexible because we know a 'one size fits all' approach isn't going to work.

Further funding will be available to assist Groups to form a delegation and prepare to enter into the Treaty Negotiations database. This Phase 2 funding is to help Traditional Owner Groups meet and demonstrate the standards – as set by the Treaty Negotiation Framework. This might involve undertaking community and nation-building activities, while continuing to determine Treaty aspirations and priorities.

### A shared resource

In addition to helping Traditional Owners prepare for their Treaty negotiations, the Self-Determination Fund's second function will be to empower our communities to build capacity, wealth and greater prosperity for future generations.

The Assembly set the Fund up as a public charitable trust to ensure it is managed in an independent and accountable way – it's managed by a Board of five directors, all First Peoples, appointed by the Assembly.

### DELIVERING FUNDS FOR AN EQUAL FOOTING

Funding will be announced in phases throughout the journey to Treaty, which will support each stage of the negotiations:

- Phase 1** Forming Treaty Aspirations  
*Now available*

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- Phase 2** Pre-Treaty Preparations  
*Now available*

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- Phase 3** Entering Treaty Negotiations

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- Phase 4** Conducting Treaty Negotiations

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- Phase 5** Formalising Treaty



Auntie Judith Dalton-Walsh



Auntie Lyn Thorpe



Uncle Daniel Kelly



Auntie Kerry Tregonning



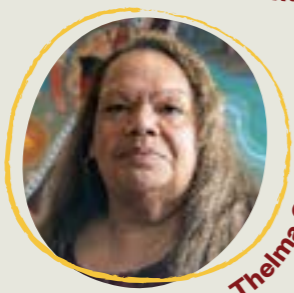
Auntie Geraldine Atkinson



Auntie Margaret Atkinson



Auntie Kelly Koumalatsos



Auntie Thelma Chilly



Uncle Mick Harding



Uncle Trevor 'Reg' Abrahams



Uncle Cliff Wandin



Uncle Alan Brown



Auntie Muriel Bamblett



Uncle Anthony Egan



Auntie Jennifer Beer



Auntie Doreen Lovett



Uncle Larry Walsh



Uncle Henry Atkinson



Uncle Leonard Clarke



Auntie Joyce Kennedy



Uncle Rodney Carter and Auntie Esme Bamblett  
Elders' Voice Co-chairs

## Meet the Elders Keeping Us Culturally Strong

After several years of foundational work yarning with Elders across the state, the Elders' Voice has come to fruition with the establishment of a standing group of Elders to provide cultural guidance and wisdom to the Assembly on the journey to Treaty.

With gender and geographic representation, the 20 Aboriginal Elders were selected for their collective knowledge, wisdom and experience following an extensive Community call out and nomination process.

Under the leadership of Elders' Voice Co-chairs, elected Assembly Members Auntie Esmeralda Bamblett and Uncle Rodney Carter, the Elders' Voice group will meet several times a year to progress their agenda and support the Assembly Members in the upcoming Treaty negotiations.

“From the very start of our journey to Treaty, Community made it clear that Elders are integral to who we are as Aboriginal people and that the Assembly needed to establish a mechanism whereby the voices of our Elders would guide the process.” **Auntie Esme Bamblett**

“We are so fortunate to have this opportunity, wherein the Assembly and our community will benefit immeasurably by the cultural knowledge of these Elders to enrich Treaty outcomes,” **Uncle Rodney Carter**

**Dr Petah Atkinson, Jihad Clark, Duean White, Andrew Jackomos PSM, Thelma Austin are the inaugural Members of the Treaty Authority. The Assembly will look to them in their roles as the keepers of wisdom on the journey to Treaty.**



## Meet the Treaty Authority

It's important the journey to Treaty is done on our terms, in a way that our communities can have trust in.

That's why the Assembly made sure an independent body to oversee negotiations was established in a way that sat outside of the state's bureaucracy – firewalled from political whims and budgetary cycles – and that its operations would be grounded in our Lore, Law and Cultural Authority.

After a rigorous and independent selection process, the Treaty Authority's inaugural Members were announced at the end of 2023 – five First Peoples of integrity who are respected figures in our communities and have the authority to bring us together. With a diverse range of skills and experience, Community can trust these keepers of wisdom to be independent and impartial.

**The Treaty Authority was established to help navigate disputes that arise between First Peoples and the State Government, or between different Traditional Owner Groups.**

During Treaty talks, it will be the job of the Treaty Authority to make sure that negotiation is being done in a way that respects the relevant laws and provides for the cultural safety of the parties. They are on hand to help should disputes arise at any point between Traditional Owners as they prepare themselves for local Treaty talks.

For thousands of generations our peoples' ancient jurisdictions and our Lore and culture have served us well. The Treaty Authority will be able to draw on our collective strength and wisdom, and continue our traditions as it oversees Treaty-making in Victoria.



## Giving young Mob a voice

Older generations have laid the foundations for Treaty, but it's our young ones who will be living it.

With the guidance of Youth Voice Convenors, elected Assembly Members Alice Pepper and Jordan Edwards, the Youth Voice is paving the way for young people to assert their voice and aspirations into the Treaty agenda.

Our Youth Voice program brings young mob together to teach them about Treaty, connect them to culture, community and Country, and build young people's leadership and participation in the Treaty process.

Treaty Youth Forums have been held in various locations around the state and are also open to parents, teachers, youth workers and caregivers.

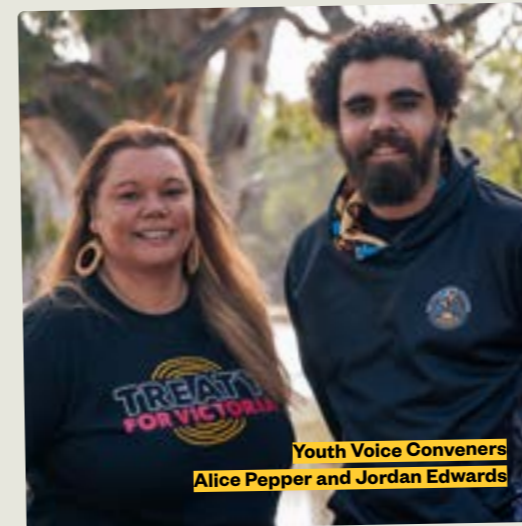
In Mildura, Robinvale and Swan Hill we hosted some wonderful events that brought young mob together with Elders so they could come together over a feed. The young fellas got to listen to inspiring stories of survival and community and the Elders heard about all the hopes and ideas the next generation has for Treaty.

The Youth Voice also had activities to help create new generations of changemakers. Such as a 'negotiations' roleplay activity for young people to get an idea of the principles of negotiation between parties.

At the South East Youth Forum in Bairnsdale, and at the AIATSIS Youth session there were interactive roleplays on the topic of whether First Peoples' languages should be taught in schools.

One group represented a 'Youth Assembly', the other group took on the role of Government or the Education Department. The Convenors acted as the 'Treaty Authority' and helped the two parties towards an agreement in a series of face-to-face negotiations.

Youth Voice activities are open to all young mob with ties to Victoria aged 12-28.



Youth Voice Convenors  
Alice Pepper and Jordan Edwards

“It’s important for us to be able to address the issues we face through this journey to Treaty so that our future generations can stand strong on Country.”

**Alice Pepper**



### Have a look out our new Youth Voice Artwork!

It's by Kurnai artist TJ, who won a competition to design an artwork for the Youth Voice. It was important to us that our Youth Voice artwork not only comes from our community, but also is made by a young person.

The Youth Voice is about bringing young mob together and empowering them on the journey to Treaty. Treaty is going create change for generations to come – that's why we need our young people to help shape it.



# Yoorrook Justice Commission's Truth-telling process

The dispossession and oppression of our people may have occurred in previous generations, but we are still living with the consequences. We are still overcoming the disadvantage and injustice that invasion caused.

This dynamic goes to the heart of why the Assembly established the Truth-telling process and the importance of the work of the Yoorrook Justice Commission. By receiving and sharing the stories of First Peoples, Yoorrook aims to examine the systemic injustices we have faced and continue to face and help craft recommendations for practical actions and reforms to address these injustices.

Yoorrook's scope is comprehensive, covering a wide range of issues related to the impact of colonisation on First Peoples in Victoria and also helping to build a shared understanding amongst the wider Victorian population.



## Assembly Members share their truths and experience

The hearings in April regarding Lands, Skies and Waters, saw several Assembly Members present evidence, including Aunty Donna Wright and Uncle Michael "Mookeye" Bell on the first day of the hearings in Portland, Victoria on Gunditjmarra Country.

Assembly Co-chairs Ngarra Murray and Rueben Berg also gave evidence emphasising the inherent connection to land that all First Peoples have and how Treaty can help repair, rekindle and expand our ability to care for Country.

The Co-chairs were back the following month to present the Assembly's submission focusing on health, education, housing, and economic life.

They acknowledged the incredible work of ACCOs who serve our communities, often with the bare minimum of required funding – further highlighting that when we have Aboriginal people and organisations in the driver's seat making the decisions, we get the best outcomes.

They explained that for too long government policies have actively excluded Aboriginal people from getting ahead in life and created unfair burdens and barriers of disadvantage, but that Treaty is an opportunity to reset the system.

We want Aboriginal communities to have the economic opportunities we've been denied. That way we can create prosperity to hand down to future generations, just like everyone else has been able to do.

## Government MPs and officials made to examine their roles

Various Government MPs and senior officials have appeared at Yoorrook hearings to be questioned about past practices, current practices, and plans for the future.

At a historic appearance – the first time an Australian leader of a state government appeared before a First Peoples-led truth-telling inquiry – the Victorian Premier, Jacinta Allan, attended a hearing in Melbourne Naarm to answer questions and offer her insights.

The Premier shared her reflections on how the state's history had deliberately excluded the "bloody stains of colonisation" for too long. She acknowledged that by better understanding how dispossession had entrenched disadvantage for Aboriginal people, the community could build a better future for all Victorians. She also reaffirmed the Government's "unequivocal" support for Treaty.



“Aboriginal people are all too familiar with promises written in the sand. So the Assembly will be looking to hold the Government to these ‘in-principle’ commitments and with the next round of Truth-telling recommendations, we’ll be wanting focused, evidence-based outcomes that we can really lock in, so there’s no wriggle room.” **Rueben Berg**



### Recommendations

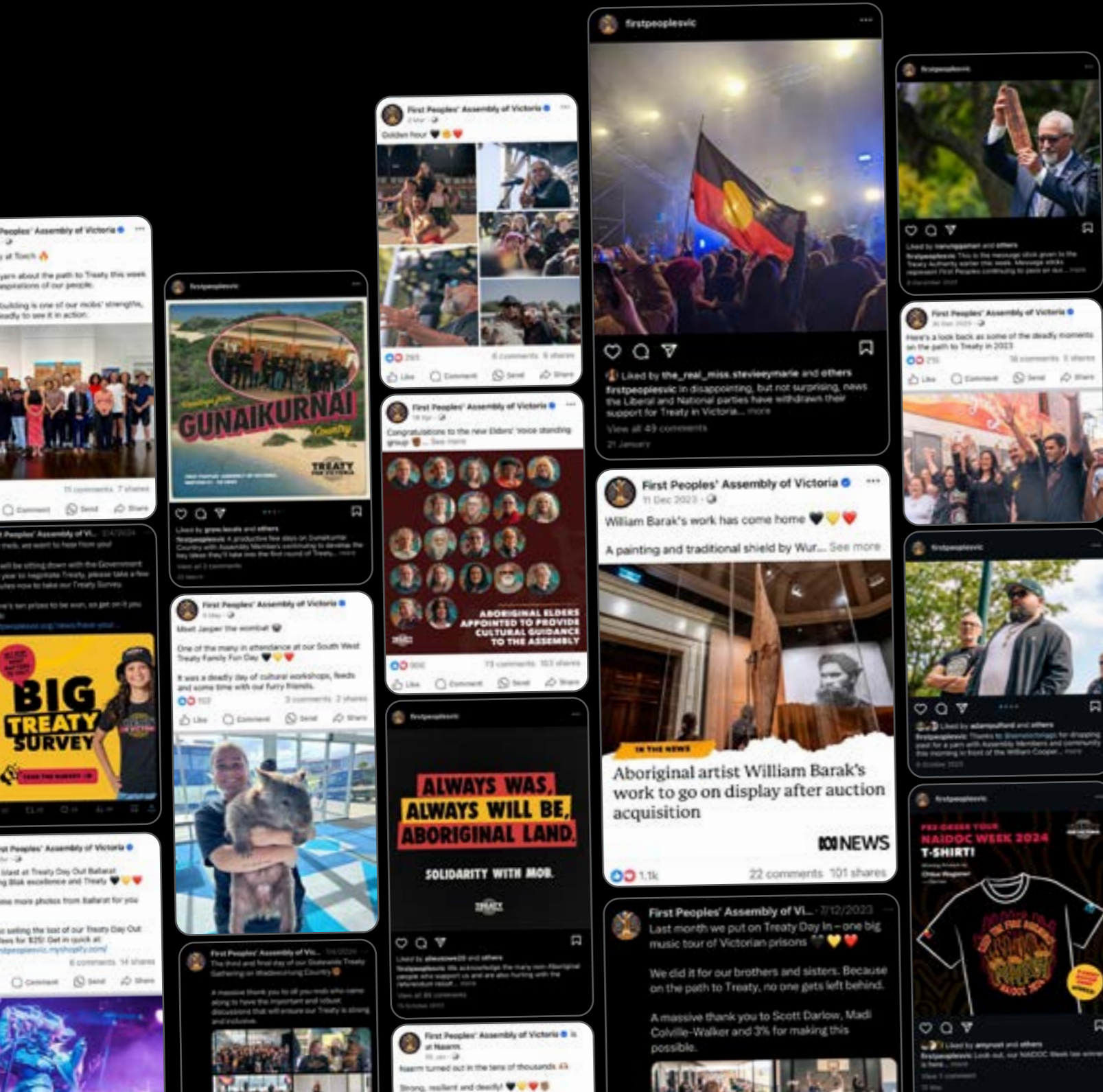
Yoorrook’s final report to the Assembly and Government is due in mid 2025, but its work and findings are already helping to inform the Assembly’s preparations for Treaty negotiations.

The recommendations outlined in its ‘critical issues report’ in August focused primarily on the criminal justice system and child protection and will be perused in negotiations.

So far, the Government has only committed in full to four of the 46 recommendations which shows there’s still a long way to go. However, the fact that it has shown support in principle to another 24 recommendations and would continue to consider 15 others, gives the Assembly and other advocates something to work with.

## OUR GROWING SOCIAL MEDIA REACH

# Spreading the word



**+ 24,373**  
New followers

**2.4M**  
Video views

**16.9M**  
Impressions

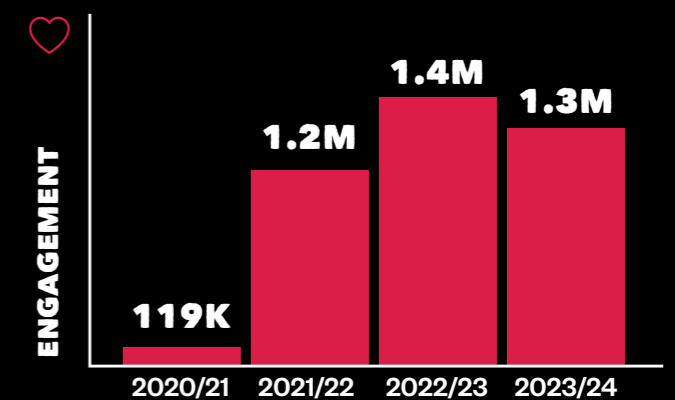
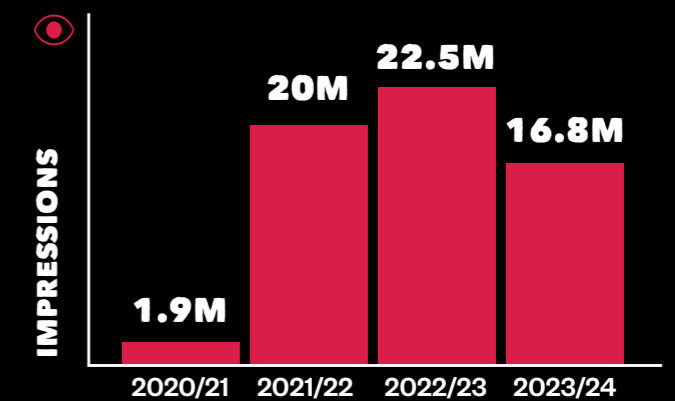
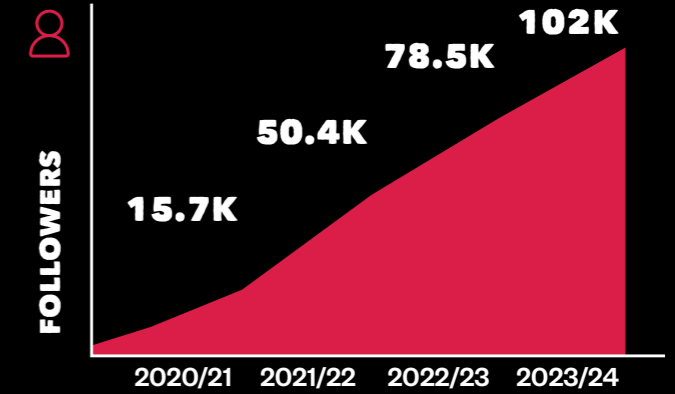
**1.3M**  
Engagements

### Cracking six digits!

In the 2023/2024 year, the Assembly reached a culminate total of over 100,000 followers on socials. Social media is an important channel to generate and distribute news, updates and information about the Treaty process in an accessible and digestible format to a wide audience.

### Friendly competition

As is tradition, we ran several competitions, some new and some returning. For its third year running we ran our NAIDOC T-shirt design competition. We also had our all-new Youth Voice artwork competition for the first time!



# Treaty Day Out Ballarat was a deadly celebration of First Peoples' music and culture held on Wadawurrung Country

# TREATY DAY OUT

City Oval Ballarat played host to a sold-out audience of 3,500 people, with mob and allies coming out on a beautiful sunny March day to show their support for Treaty and have a great time together.

The formidable Jessica Mauboy blew the crowd away with a showstopping headline performance, while the jam-packed bill of Electric Fields, Mo'Ju, 3%, Scott Darlow, Blackfire Australia, Brolga, Madi Colville Walker Music, Jada Weazel and Ganisha made sure there was something for everyone.

Wadawurrung Traditional Owners along with community members from the Ballarat and District Aboriginal Cooperative worked together on the creation of a stunning dance performance and Welcome to Country, that signified the collective unity of Community in Ballarat, and across Victoria.

Now in its 4th edition following concerts in Shepparton, Bendigo and Naarm, Treaty Day Out continues to showcase Blak excellence, build momentum amongst mob, and bring allies into the fold to grow the shared vision of Treaty for Victoria.





FIRST PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY OF VICTORIA PRESENTS

# TREATY DAY IN 2023 PRISON TOUR



**SCOTT DARLOW • 3%  
MADI COLVILLE-WALKER**

**WALK WITH US ON THE JOURNEY TOWARDS TREATY**

Guitar artwork: Sienna Thomson, proud Woi-Wurung Wurundjui and Yorta/Yorta woman.

Given how fun our Treaty Day Out festivals are, we wanted to make sure no one missed out – so we put on our first ever Treaty Day In prison tour!



Supporting mob on the inside and reforming the justice system is a key focus of Treaty for Victoria. Structural racism, disadvantage and discrimination in policing means unfair laws and policies hit Aboriginal people hardest – our people get locked up more than any other group in the world.

During the 2023 Treaty Elections, the Assembly ensured mob behind bars could cast their votes. This saw over 90% of Aboriginal prisoners enrolled with the Assembly to have their say. The tour was a great way to say thanks and make sure mob on the inside know that Treaty will make sure no one is left behind.

With the help of our friends, Scott Darlow, 3% and Madi Colville-Walker we visited over 16 correctional facilities across the state to put on a series of live performances.

Our strength is in our numbers, and our numbers must include everyone. We must ensure Treaty delivers real change for all future generations and that includes our mob who are incarcerated.

## FRIENDS OF TREATY

# Inviting allies to walk with us

We might be strong, resilient and deadly, but as only one percent of the population, it can be challenging for First Peoples to wield political clout. So in addition to building our own collective strength, the Assembly is also keen to provide our allies with ways to strengthen our position.

This year we launched the **Friends of Treaty** initiative.

Allies can already sign up to receive our updates and newsletter so they can learn more and stay up to date. And they can show their support with our ally-friendly range of merch. But now we've set up a Treaty fighting fund that allies can contribute to:

[firstpeoplesvic.org/donate](https://firstpeoplesvic.org/donate)

This will help ensure the Assembly can maintain its staunch and independent advocacy, and deploy various negotiation and campaign tactics to advance Treaty and support our communities in a range of ways.

We've also rolled out a framework to help all organisations support the Assembly and build public awareness and support for Treaty.

The public pledge that not-for-profit organisations can take as Friends of Treaty, centres around four principles of collaboration, education, advocacy, and activation.

### TIPS FOR ALLY ORGANISATIONS

#### COLLABORATE



Work closely with First Peoples' communities, staff, and partners, so they can set the directions and priorities.

#### EDUCATE



Take steps to ensure your teams are on board and culturally competent and help increase awareness and understanding of First Peoples' cultures, histories, and the Treaty process.

#### ADVOCATE



Amplify the Assembly's messages, incorporate pro-Treaty stances in your organisations' advocacy work, and take proactive steps to inform government MPs that your organisation stands in support with the Assembly.

#### ACTIVATE



Encourage your audiences to also walk with us on the shared journey towards Treaty and provide ways for people to get involved.

“Treaty will help Aboriginal communities thrive, that way we can come together on equal footing and create a better shared future. We have a lot to offer and I think most people who call Victoria home want to know more about our cultures and languages and expand their knowledge of our shared history.”

**Ngarra Murray**



## SUPPORTING THE ELECTED MEMBERS



The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria has a growing operational team to support the elected Members to implement their agenda for the journey to Treaty.



“This is a pivotal moment for the self-determination of First Peoples in Victoria. I’m very proud to join the team and be building on their existing work. We’ll see some deadly Treaty outcomes start to roll out in Victoria over the next few years” **Damein Bell**

## The Assembly's new CEO

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria has appointed its next CEO. His job is to manage the operational team that supports the elected Members to implement their agenda for the journey to Treaty.

**Damein Bell** is a proud Gunditjmara man and has three decades of experience across community development, education, native title, cultural heritage, tourism and Indigenous nation building. Alongside the Gunditjmara community, Damein worked on achieving the Budj Bim Listing in 2019.

The Assembly thanks outgoing CEO Andy Gargett for his significant contribution to the work of the Assembly.



# YOUR TREATY CHEAT SHEET



After decades of Community advocacy and activism, the formal Victorian Treaty process began in 2016.

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

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The Assembly held elections in 2019 and 2023.

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There are currently 33 Members – all Victorian Traditional Owners of Country chosen by their communities.

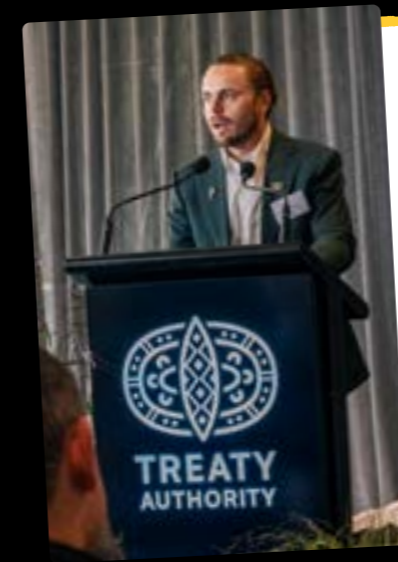
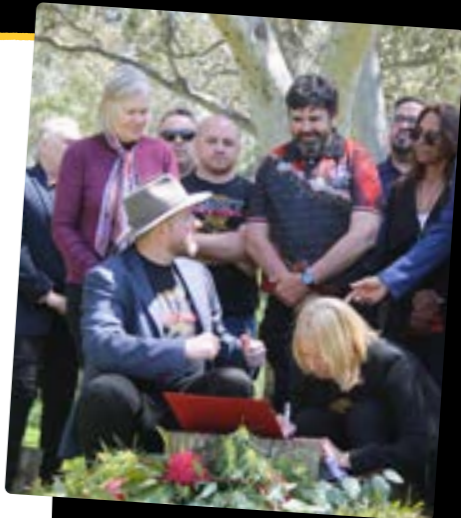
The Treaty Negotiation Framework agreement was signed in 2022 and provides the process and ground-rules for negotiations.

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The Framework allows for many Treaties to be negotiated between the Government and Traditional Owners across the state.

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It also allows for a Statewide Treaty to be negotiated between the Government and the Assembly.



The Self-Determination Fund is managed by independent experts but owned by the Assembly. It was created to help Traditional Owners prepare for and conduct their Treaty negotiations and to help First Nations communities generate wealth and prosperity now and for future generations.

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The Treaty Authority is the independent umpire that will oversee negotiations and help resolve disputes that might arise between the Government and the Assembly or between Traditional Owners.

Traditional Owner Treaties will vary as their focus will reflect the priorities and aspirations in the particular areas they relate to.

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The Statewide Treaty will drive structural reform – focusing on making sure First Peoples have the power to come up with and deliver practical solutions at a local level – from improving the way services like health and education are delivered to using local knowledge to care for land and keeping culture strong.

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Negotiations for Statewide Treaty will start by the end of 2024.



## IF YOU'RE MOB, ENROL TO SHOW YOUR SUPPORT AND HAVE YOUR SAY!

→ [FIRSTPEOPLESVIC.ORG/ENROL](https://firstpeoplesvic.org/enrol)

**ENTRY INTO STATEWIDE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS:**

**WE ARE READY**

Declaration of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.



This always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.

Our sovereignty was never ceded.

We are still here and here we will remain. Strong. Resilient. Fearless. Together.

Our connection to Country, our pride in our cultures and collective identities, and the lore of these lands have survived and will thrive once again.

We recognise that this moment is because of the courage, strength and struggle of our Elders, Ancestors and those who have come before us. Their legacy drives our fight for Treaty.

As the elected Members of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, chosen by our communities to represent them on the shared journey to Treaty in Victoria, we now take our next collective step forward.

We declare the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria ready to enter into Statewide Treaty negotiations.

We affirm our right and ability to serve as the First Peoples' Representative Body to negotiate Statewide Treaty as outlined in the Treaty Negotiation Framework and relevant legislation.

For us, self-determination is not just a destination - it is a way of life. It embodies how we operate and all that we do now and into the future.

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is a manifestation of our sovereignty as we exercise our inherent rights, maintain our continuing connection to Country, and uphold our cultures, lore and law.

When it comes to our matters, our communities are the experts. That is why we need the freedom and power to make the decisions about our lives, on our own terms.

We are ready to negotiate Treaty.



By enrolling with the Assembly, you get to choose the people who will best represent your views on the journey to Treaty.

Also, when we grow the Assembly's electoral roll, we grow our collective strength and wisdom. Together we'll be able to negotiate a strong Treaty that improves the lives of our people.

**So enrol today to show your support and help get Treaty done!**



SCAN WITH YOUR  
PHONE'S CAMERA

# GET ENROLLED TO GET INVOLVED

→ [FIRSTPEOPLESVIC.ORG/ENROL](https://FIRSTPEOPLESVIC.ORG/ENROL)



**If you're already enrolled,** encourage more of your mob to enrol. If everyone enrolled with the Assembly encourages just one friend to enrol, we can double our strength by doubling our electoral roll and send a clear message to the Government that we mean business.