

TRANSCRIPT

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Inquiry into Enhancing Victorian University Governance

Melbourne – Thursday 14 May 2026

MEMBERS

Alison Marchant – Chair

Kim O’Keeffe – Deputy Chair

Roma Britnell

Anthony Cianflone

John Mullahy

Nicole Werner

Dylan Wight

WITNESSES

Professor Mark Rose, Vice-President, and

Uncle Lionel Bamblett, General Manager, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc; and

Lisa Briggs, Chief Executive Officer, and

Fina Weight, Senior Policy Officer, Ngaweeyan Maar-oo.

The CHAIR: Welcome to the public hearings for the Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee's Inquiry into Enhancing Victorian University Governance. All mobile telephones should now be turned to silent.

All evidence given today is being recorded by Hansard and broadcast live on the Parliament's website. While all evidence taken by the committee is protected by parliamentary privilege, comments repeated outside of this hearing, including on social media, may not be protected by this privilege. Witnesses will be provided with a proof version of the transcript to check. Verified transcripts and other documents provided to the committee during the hearing will be published on the committee's website.

Thank you all for joining us today and answering some of our questions, but also for your submissions that you have made as well. We would like to jump straight into some questions, because we think that would be the best use of our time. But first of all, what I might do is ask you to introduce yourself and maybe what organisation or role that you have and then we will go to our questions. I might start with you at this end.

Lionel BAMBLETT: Lionel Bamblett. I am the general manager of VAEAI, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated. What was the third part to that?

The CHAIR: What is your role there, or –

Lionel BAMBLETT: General manager. Basically, I manage the organisation. At the moment all the staff are actually in Bendigo at an in-service, which is quite good actually.

The CHAIR: Very good. Thank you.

Lionel BAMBLETT: I took the time to come down and meet with you guys.

The CHAIR: Thank you for doing that.

Mark ROSE: Thanks, Alison. I am Mark Rose. I am the Vice-President of VAEAI, but I also have a position at Deakin University.

The CHAIR: Perfect. Thank you.

Lisa BRIGGS: I am Lisa Briggs. I am the CEO of Ngaweeyan Maar-oo, which is the formal partner with the Victorian government on the implementation and oversight of the national agreement for Closing the Gap. VAEAI and Mark are board members as part of our caucus.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Okay.

Fina WEIGHT: Hi, everyone. I am Fina Weight. I am a senior policy officer at Ngaweeyan Maar-oo.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Thanks so much. Kim, I might go to you first.

Kim O'KEEFFE: Thank you all for being here and thank you so much for your submission. The majority of Victorian universities have a clearly identified Indigenous advisory forum or equivalent. Are these forums able to have input into decisions made by councils? Why or why not? Do you understand the question?

Lisa BRIGGS: Who should go first?

Mark ROSE: Do you want to arm wrestle?

Lisa BRIGGS: You go first and then I will go.

Mark ROSE: We know that in this state we are well endowed for universities – you have got 25 per cent of the nation's universities, yet we have got one of the smallest Aboriginal populations. So while the councils – a lot of them – do have Aboriginal representation, we would argue that there is probably a need for that representation to be able to demonstrate they have agency from community orgs, so they can truncate the voice of the community into that decision-making at council or senate levels. Some places have councils, some call it senate.

Lisa BRIGGS: Just following on, our role at Ngaweeyan Maar-oo is to ensure that governments embed the national agreement, particularly around the priority reforms 1 to 4. Priority reform 1 is more direct to your question around shared decision-making. What we see is that the clauses that underpin that do not reflect currently across the universities. So our recommendation would be to endorse those clauses and embed them not just as part of an advisory mechanism but in totality in terms of governance as well, to ensure that all of the standards and principles underpinned by the national agreement align with the universities and the ministerial ‘ten principles’ that you have put in place.

Kim O’KEEFFE: Thank you.

Mark ROSE: Can I just make an additional comment, if that is okay – Victoria is very unique insofar as while we have the formal structures of governance, there is also another arrangement which is uniquely Victorian, and that is Toorong Marnong – it is something that came out of VAEAI. It is the ten universities in this state through the Victorian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee, moving us to collaborate rather than compete. Back in the day, we competed, to the detriment of our kids – dreams were quashed, they dropped out and they went to where the best marketing was. Now we are moving to have additional programs with that. So that is another form of governance and input from the community into universities. Lionel and I meet with the VCs a couple of times a year.

Lionel BAMBLETT: Yes.

Lisa BRIGGS: Can I just add one, sorry?

The CHAIR: Go for it. You are right.

Lisa BRIGGS: Ngaweeyan Maar-oo had undertaken a Victorian audit on the priorities and progress that they had made against the priority reforms 1 to 4. There are 136 individual indicators that measure the progress, and what we are finding – it does not matter which institution it is – is that the embedment of the policy is not occurring. You might have goodwill gestures that do not actually then become operationalised, and what the agreement actually looks for and holds accountability on is a demonstration of how you actually are embedding it right from the tier of governments all across the working group mechanisms as subcommittees of governance that has a much stronger focus on the role and responsibility for First Nations people. What we also had noticed is there is an absence of charters that are specifically made for Aboriginal people that actually provide the interpreters guide on what should be embedded and how to embed in any new governance reform.

Lionel BAMBLETT: With the organisation that I head up at the moment, VAEAI, Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Incorporated, we cover all of education from birth to death, basically; that is what we say education is about. Our growth in early years – we have an early years unit and we are growing that. During that international pandemic we had 100 per cent enrolment rates in kindergarten right across the state for four-year-olds, and we are growing that. We are growing that space into primary school and also then into secondary school, and also into TAFE. As we know, TAFE colleges and universities are mostly sometimes partners, so the workload is actually into that space and then into university.

Mark touched on Toorong Marnong. What we have done is we have developed a strategy with the state as a partnership in education and training. We have that, and that was done in 1990 and is still going today. We are considered the principal partner in education in that context. We have that functioning at the moment. So we look at early years, primary, secondary, as I just spoke about. But also we branched out in 2008, when we held a world conference here – VAEAI actually ran that. What we did is we launched the partnership with the Victorian Vice-Chancellors’ Committee. That is called Toorong Marnong. We actually interact with each of the universities in that context as well. But we not only interact with them, we actually work with them quite clearly and also then carry that forward into what we are trying to do in the community. So we are getting student participation. When the organisation was first formed we had two year 12 graduates in the whole state of Victoria. Most recently we had 700. So we are growing the participation rate in that space, but also in the university space that is growing as well. I am also on the council at Deakin University, the Indigenous council down at Deakin University, which I have got to also acknowledge. And also the work that is happening in that space in higher education is flourishing in Victoria at present. More can be done always. Right?

Kim O’KEEFFE: That is why we are here too.

Lionel BAMBLETT: That is what this is about.

Kim O'KEEFFE: Brilliant.

Lionel BAMBLETT: The way to grow it in our context, in our Indigenous people's context in Victoria, is about growing the community's voice and input into the planning and processes to do with higher education. And when that does not happen, you do not get that growth that is happening. At the moment we do have it; we have that growth happening. We would like to grow more. This state of Victoria is the first state in this country now called Australia that has actually launched a treaty, and the government should be congratulated about that. But also what we have got to look at is how we utilise that and grow forward. I mean, growing forward in the context of inputs from Aboriginal people in those spaces has to be paramount, otherwise it just will not happen. You have got to have the community's voice to flourish.

Kim O'KEEFFE: We might extend on that with some of our questions, so thank you so much for that. It is really helpful to tell us about where you are at and the great work that you are doing. We really appreciate it.

The CHAIR: Thank you. I will go to John or Anthony.

Anthony CIANFLONE: Thank you, Chair. Thank you for your submission and for appearing as well. I will just pick up from Kim's question. All the goodwill and the great work that you guys are all doing respectively, which combined with the treaty going forward, obviously are going to continue progressing better outcomes. Given this committee's terms of reference and where we are focused at the moment, I guess what I am curious to understand more about is around what the barriers and the impacts are under the current governance structures across our university sector that are creating challenges and barriers for those of First Nations communities. As part of that, what are the primary issues you are all hearing from your respective communities when it comes to applying, enrolling or progressing studies through university as a First Nations person? Whether it is as a student, as an academic, as a staff member, as an undergraduate or as a postgraduate, what are you hearing from those different perspectives? If you could perhaps talk to some of that, that would be useful.

Mark ROSE: Great question. With the ecosystem and the community of practice, we are in a great state for education. Having 10 universities, if you put them together, it is a great tapestry of potential. It is getting the voice up, and it is transparency and reporting against targets, which is important. One of the things that I have done – and I am not here to talk about my university, but I have been around a long time; you do not get this colour hair unless you have done your time. When we look for outcomes, we look at the university as a whole, and the reality is that some of them are billion-dollar businesses broken into faculties that are multimillion-dollar faculties. That being the case, what we have done at my university, which I think is a good model, is we have compacts in every faculty. We extrapolated the targets down from council to faculty level to make a more bespoke outcome. The reality is our kids, when they turn away from science in year 9, turn off from engineering and a whole lot of STEM subjects. If we can do that, working with the community we can turn the tide. Bespoke responses extrapolated into faculties would be my suggestion. If I had a magic wand, that would be something I would put in.

The CHAIR: Interesting.

Lisa BRIGGS: Ngaweeyan Maar-oo has also done population-based projections, and we did one particularly around education. I want to acknowledge the work that VAEAI has done in particular around TAFE. What we saw was Aboriginal people are more likely to go to TAFE directly from school. They have a 70 per cent success rate in completion, and it is probably a lot to do with the responsiveness of partnerships at the local level – so place based, evidence based. That actually encourages future employment. As we know with health systems, aged care, disability or social work, that is where it is. But there is no lever of change that actually then elevates that into university, so we have this gap currently of why it is that the 70 per cent completion rate is not the same completion rate in universities. In that pathway something is missing as part of that process.

To guide the process in terms of governance, I believe that there needs to be much stronger representation, whether or not it is the adoption of the board as a subcommittee that you are talking about and that Mark has just referenced, but you must have a position on the board that helps govern all of that to make sure it is in system and in sync. From the review that I did this morning, the alignment is not there, and so you need to

make sure that all the policies, procedures and governance align. It is a really good thing that you guys are doing. I commend you for that because now is the time – we are evolving and governance measures are changing – but you have got to make sure that you put the governance mechanism in. The AICD are very good on all of these things, as we know, but are they actually filtering it so it represents us both in the governance section and into the working group, so that you can have escalation as part of the response, again, with any issue that comes around? The leadership at the top determines what happens in the flow below. So again, I think you need to get that right and adopt – I am going to keep flogging this – the principles under the national Close the Gap agreement and the principles of the treaty agreement that we have just done through legislation. They are strong. One of the things that the Commonwealth education minister – and I may get the terminology wrong because it is not my language. The nayri Wingara principles really only look at data sovereignty. I did a quick snapshot about how they actually go across the four priority reforms. They do not. They are the strongest in priority reform 2. The only two that actually do it are the treaty principles and the Close the Gap principles – they are very, very strong. So if you follow that as a guide, if you really look at the clauses and embed them as part of architecture, we will be in a much better position.

Mark ROSE: If I could add to that too, in this state there is a policy between VAEAI and the TAFE called Wurreker, and the community signs off on the report. And that involvement, I think, contributes to that success rate. The other thing, if we ever wondered why the gap is not being closed, and hardly arrested in many points, it is because we live in silos. Higher education has a different language and ethos than TAFE, and it goes through the whole thing; it is through the community. We can create bridges between the silos, like Toorong Marnong, like Wurreker. This is why Victoria is in a good place. We are great state, but we can do better. The principles of transparency, reporting, setting mutual targets and hearing the voice of the mob at the highest level are so very important.

Lisa BRIGGS: Can I just quickly redirect as well? It would be remiss of me if I do not say this because of my other members, but somewhere around the acknowledgement of the significant role that the Aboriginal training bodies play – the RTOs. We have three in Victoria. They predominantly filter out and churn out the highest numbers of Aboriginal students across the state. It is from VACSAL, who do community services. We have got VACCHO, who does health and wellbeing, and Bubup Wilam, who does early childhood. And so I think somewhere in that alignment, the recognition of place-based and how you bring the expertise to help foster and provide the strategy that you need would be a good thing.

The one thing that I also noticed, and I did a bit of a review – I review a lot of things, sorry. I had a look at Melbourne University's annual report this morning to actually see how much transparency they are providing in terms of performance and feedback. Now, I would say that their performance and feedback is very good internally about what they are doing, but where it is a bit short is on what they are actually doing in contribution to the sector, to our sector. That transparency is not there. Again, working with the points that Mark has raised about Aboriginal representation in experts on committees, you will get that.

The CHAIR: Thank you. Roma.

Roma BRITNELL: Firstly, can I acknowledge Lisa, my good friend for many, many years. Thank you for coming, and to others as well. There are lots of committees and a lot of work that has been going on for a very long time, and I commend you for the work you are doing at VAEAI and VACCHO that I was very familiar with as well and the gains you have made in the early childhood space, those three areas that you just discussed. You talked just then about place-based. There are other professions that used to be place-based, and universities have sort of gone more down the academic line and away from – nursing springs to mind. Is that the sort of thing you are saying would be more appropriate for getting Aboriginal community members involved in tertiary education? Is that what you are saying?

Lisa BRIGGS: That is exactly what I am saying, Roma. What I found –

Roma BRITNELL: Which we experienced together. Alice was our first output, do you remember?

Lisa BRIGGS: Yes, I do. Again, the things that I measure when I am looking at any mainstream provider are: is it accessible, is it available, is it affordable and is it appropriate? Those are the four As that I run by as part of any assessment process. Largely now – and this is why we have got a lot of lessons to learn from TAFE – there are a lot of things that are free so you get uptake. You have got a lot more opportunity of being online. But when you do online – I did an online course recently with a university – I think that some of the barriers to

that are around supporting and navigating systems. For older people like me who have not been to university for 40 years, I do not know how to use the new systems, but there was not a person that could help me do that. Again, these are the types of things that Aboriginal experts can actually tell you how to navigate the system more specifically.

When I was talking before, Roma, about the priority reform 2, that is more around sector strengthening of Aboriginal community controlled and traditional owners, so the workforce underneath: caring for country, health workers, disability, doctors, nurses – all the things that we need – and economists in the university sector. But again, where is the pathway and leverage that supports that for us to enter in that field? Generally, what happens is we learn as we go, and we are actually not getting the foundational stuff that we need. So there is this alignment, and I do believe there is enough expertise like Mark and like Lionel, with VAEAI, to actually talk to you about the significance of place-based – it absolutely has to be. If it cannot be specifically place-based, how can it be regional? And how can you ensure that everyone has digital access to all of the things that are required so it makes it more accessible? That is what we found.

Roma BRITNELL: So that is not just digital access where we cannot get signal, it is about support with mentoring and –

Lisa BRIGGS: Correct. Equipment as well, not just the access to the internet itself, because we found access is pretty good around Victoria. There are blockouts, we know, but we are not really addressing it for ours when it comes to disadvantage. So we are not really looking at all the disadvantage things that prohibit us from participation.

Roma BRITNELL: Do the universities have an Aboriginal liaison person like they do in the hospital system, for example?

Lisa BRIGGS: I think the problem with having one Aboriginal liaison officer within large institutions, where you can, it is about how accessible they are because of –

Roma BRITNELL: Online and in the regions, yes.

Lisa BRIGGS: the cultural load that they actually have to cover. So this is why we talk about embedment. How do you embed practice, standards of practice, across the universities from the governance level, all the way through the tiers to ensure that they are all doing the same thing, rather than just relying on one Aboriginal unit?

Roma BRITNELL: And can I ask one last question? You said that you went from two to 700 students. That is a great achievement. What has happened in the university space? How many, in comparison to those figures – do you have those figures?

Lionel BAMBLETT: You might be better with it, but, I will say, being on the council at Deakin University and being involved in Melbourne University and the other universities, basically the numbers are growing, but the only way you are going to grow those numbers and expand them is to grow the knowledge base in the community. Our communities actually – do not take this as an insult – but our community sometimes see you guys as the enemy, right? Basically, we have got to break that barrier down and do that process of working together going forward, and the only way to do that is the sharing of a knowledge base. At the moment, we have a program called Toorong Marnong, which Mark touched on previously and it was actually highly successful. But we have got one person employed in there. That is a negotiated agreement with the Vice-Chancellors' Committee of Victoria. We need to grow that, and we met recently with the vice-chancellor's representative, and we did raise that point because we need to grow that, because we have got to do that transmission of information. If we want to grow the numbers and participants into those spaces, we need to grow that, and we need to demystify what that is about. And that is what we are doing.

Roma BRITNELL: Can I acknowledge what you just said about the enemy? Do you mean gubbas or do you mean the universities or do you mean us politicians? What do you actually mean by the enemy, that sometimes people are feeling intimidated.

Lionel BAMBLETT: I do not mean to be insulting.

Roma BRITNELL: No, no, I acknowledge that.

Lionel BAMBLETT: Probably everyone.

Roma BRITNELL: I am just wanting clarification.

Lionel BAMBLETT: I do not see you as an enemy. I see you as someone we can work with, otherwise we would not be sitting here. But also at the same time, we are talking about some parent living out in the back suburbs of Melbourne –

Roma BRITNELL: I understand.

Lionel BAMBLETT: and you have got to reach out to them. You see, we live in the most dispersed Aboriginal population in Australia, to be honest. We make up 7 per cent of the Aboriginal population of the country, they are the last figures I saw. But also, the majority of students that go to schools in Victoria go to schools where they are the only Aboriginal person in the school in a lot of cases. So how do you get that information out to that family that is out there in isolation? It is that process as well. We are getting the numbers, as I said about the early years space. We are getting the numbers in secondary, in senior primary and TAFE and university. And I know that was touched on, we need to grow the university numbers, but we are. They are growing. But the only way to grow that is the transmission of information.

We have a program called Toorong Marnong, and we have a day called Big Day Out, where we invite the community down to meet people in that space. What we were able to do initially was actually have a forum where parents could come in and sit down and be spoken to about what a university means for their little darling. You are talking about a place that is mystifying, so we have got to share that information, and it is happening. That is what that program is about. That is what we are attempting to do. We have built a process across the state of Victoria at VAEAI that has 32 LAECGS, local Aboriginal education consultative groups, and we are growing that community participation in those spaces. And I am talking across the board in education and training – let us not forget training.

Mark ROSE: If I could take a plug at that question too, Roma, what we are looking at is a leap of faith. A lot of our parents had a very bad experience at school. It is through VAEAI that we can knock out them seeing it as an opponent. They see the education system not as a liberator but as an oppressor. What, if anything, we have done for the last 40 years at VAEAI is turn that around, turn it from the oppression into liberation. It is just things like if you come from a leafy suburb and your kid is doing year 12, well, you always drive them to the first English exam at VCE – just those little things. What does it take? I have had calls on the Toorong Marnong hotline to come to meet kids crying. They were in nightclubs, and they had just been hit by their ATAR score. One kid was crying their eyes out, and I said, ‘What score did you get?’ She told me, and I said, ‘Do you know that is 10 points higher than the average in your region?’ when she told me where she lived. That transgenerational knowledge turns the systems into oppression, and what we are doing is educating the mob and building their capacity and confidence to engage with a modern education system at compulsory years, at independent Catholic schools, at early childhood, at TAFE and at university and RTOs. So VAEAI have the whole spectrum. My generation and Lionel’s were barely allowed to go beyond elementary school.

Lionel BAMBLETT: Or if you did, you went to a segregated part of school.

Mark ROSE: Yes, exactly. So we are coming back from a backmarker in the race, and that is why it is so very important, that university governance and university engagement. Education is the key, it is the silver bullet, it is a ticket to move from oppression to liberation, and it will close the gap eventually.

The CHAIR: Yes. Thank you.

Lisa BRIGGS: Can I add one thing, and I will be quick. I do believe that under the treaty legislation there is a section in there that is around duty to consult. I would actually elevate that and put that as part of the governance process, where universities have a duty to consult the Aboriginal community, the community-controlled sector and traditional owners to ensure that they are part of the population planning around education and then deliver on it.

John MULLAHY: We have got another inquiry into student pathways, where we saw really good stuff at Gordon Institute down in Geelong and how they have got First Nations people coming through education there. You have stated that there is a difference in the governance with the TAFE sector. Do any of the dual sector institutions, like Swinburne or RMIT, do it better than straight universities? Are there any examples of getting First Nations peoples through the TAFE section and then getting them into university education?

Lisa BRIGGS: I would say they all have different levers of advantage and progress, but are they aligned? No. I believe that through this process the alignment could actually happen and occur so it makes it a lot stronger in how they operate and the lessons are learned and shared. It should be part of that governance structure and working group committee as part of the governance – again, referring to what Mark said before – so that you are then getting consistency right across. That is probably a task or action once the governance groups are actually set up. But the representation is really important. It is not just representation in consultation at the middle level. It has to be in the governance and the leadership, because that was a bit weak when I had a look at the chapters within the accords that you were trying to do within the principles. This is why I am being a bit specific in what I am pushing for.

Mark ROSE: And John, if I could toll in too, we have got half the universities as dual sectors, but the other half I have a relationship with, so they are dual sectors by stealth rather than by formal – you could argue that. But I would argue also with the accord, the language has changed in the last week; it used to be harmonisation between TAFE and university and now they are talking about wrapping around higher education. So even at the commission, which is still about to announce their commissioners, they are still in that process of thinking forward and building. Education is a massive, crowded radar screen, with blips on a radar, and what we hope is that the ATEC will put them in alignment so they will land in sequence with impact – that is the last metaphor I am going to use today.

Lisa BRIGGS: Is there a possibility to actually ensure that within the accord or with any governance process that is put in place, a new structure, there is – this is why I was talking about the chapter before – a dedicated chapter around First Nations that is very explicit, I am going to say, to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap, particularly around the partnership clauses of priority reform 1? All of them are important, but if you do not get that foundation of priority reform 1 around the elements of the partnership, how you do the duty to consult or the fundamental foundation things that are tied to priority reform 4 around evidence base so that there is a real strong synergy about what the future workforce needs are across the country for Aboriginal people that align like this – I am not sure if you also know, but VAEAI is actually heading up one of the new national education bodies as part of Closing the Gap. So they have a very good line of sight about what needs to happen in terms of First Nations reform.

The CHAIR: And that is at a national level?

Lisa BRIGGS: Yes. It is under the national close the gap, and it is part of one of the policy partnerships under joint council. So again, some of the things that you guys are talking about, it is actually a line, but I did not see it incorporated, which is why I am going on about embedment and consistency across, because then we get better coordination, we get better bang for buck and efficiencies, all the things that Parliament wants as politicians.

The CHAIR: Yes, absolutely. Dylan, I will head to you.

Dylan WIGHT: Thanks, Chair. We have spoken briefly about treaty and the First Nations assembly. What role can the First Nations assembly play – and may do so if there is the appetite to legislate some of this stuff down the track anyway – in strengthening university governance systems in Victoria, and is there a role they can play that maybe boosts participation in the sector?

Mark ROSE: That is a really good question. Of course the treaty is brand new, and the assembly was just voted in a week or two ago. We are very optimistic about it. The treaty has absorbed a lot of Yoorrook suggestions, proposals, recommendations – I am searching for the word – and what I would like to see with the treaty is that they play a more prominent role. You know how there are four groups coming off the treaty? One of them is permanent truth-telling. There might be times where we need to take things to treaty to have a discussion or a verification process. So I would see that would be potentially – but it is all aspirational at this stage.

Lisa BRIGGS: From Ngaweeyan Maar-oo's point of view – and I should declare my conflict of interest because I was a previous First Peoples' Assembly chamber member for metropolitan – there are a couple of things that Gellung Warl now as the institute can actually support in this process. One of them is around appointments and how they can assist institutions and the right people to be part of 'independence' as governance structures. So that is one of the things that can occur. It should be done in collaboration, though, because I notice within the reporting there were a lot of issues around conflicts of interest and all of those types of things, so I think that actually helps alleviate some of those things that you are looking at.

The other thing is, there are four elements of the architecture, which is Gellung Warl, the institute itself – so the institute is around leadership and how that may then influence and work in collaboration with universities across Australia, if not just in Victoria, about what needs to happen in response to building our new leadership as we go on.

The other one is we have got the independent mechanism that has been set up, which is Nginma Ngainga Wara, and so therefore it would be able to hold accountability to mainstream institutions, which is part of priority reform 3 under transformation under the CTG. The other part would be Telkuna, which is the truth-telling process where they actually should be looking at the Yoorrook recommendations and then how you embed them. So it is a constant flow of the policy development from Gellung Warl, then you are looking at the independent mechanism of accountability and then also ensuring that they are enshrining the Yoorrook recommendations that our elders and many community members actually participated in to change.

Mark ROSE: Dylan, just the other thing is that VAEAI is mentioned in the treaty Act. It is probably the only ACCO that is actually mentioned explicitly.

Lionel BAMBLETT: In that context and representing VAEAI, I have got to say I am very happy about that, but also at the same time the way to grow anything is about community voice and community input. And of course what our community has done over the years is build certain organisations – peak organisations and local organisations – to cover nearly every facet of our lives. It is growing and it is working. We can see it actually working. We can see young people coming through and going into universities, going into TAFE and going into apprenticeships, traineeships, whatever their desire is. But it is growing, and the only way to grow that is that community input and community voice.

The CHAIR: Thank you. And I think that is a great way to end our session. I am sorry we have run out of time today to keep going. But if there is anything that sort of sparked from our conversation today that you think you need to address again you can write to the committee with further information. You are more than welcome to do that as well.

Mark ROSE: Can I just plant one question?

The CHAIR: Absolutely.

Mark ROSE: I am not going to hold you up, but one of the things that if I was sitting across that side of the table I would be wondering is: how can you guys placate the Commonwealth–state relationship? We raise things where they say, 'Oh no, we're a national institute,' and you guys are hearing this. So can I just leave that bit of homework for you? There will be a short-answer exam later on! Thank you. I did not mean to burn up time.

The CHAIR: Thank you.

Lisa BRIGGS: Can I just echo there that interface with the Commonwealth is lacking, especially for us as First Nations people, so anything that can elevate this is a good thing for Victoria.

The CHAIR: Yes. Thank you very much.

Lionel BAMBLETT: Never get between a microphone and a blackfella.

The CHAIR: Or a politician.

Lionel BAMBLETT: One thing I would like to add before you close. I can understand the wish to grow that to the Commonwealth level, but our preference actually is to grow what we have here. What you have growing

here in this state of Victoria, or the state now called Victoria – you have got to remember this is Aboriginal land – how do we then grow it here and grow it for our community so that it can also prosper our community and your community?

The CHAIR: We certainly would like to lead in this space. I think we could do that. Thank you for your time today. We will now end the broadcast.

Witnesses withdrew.