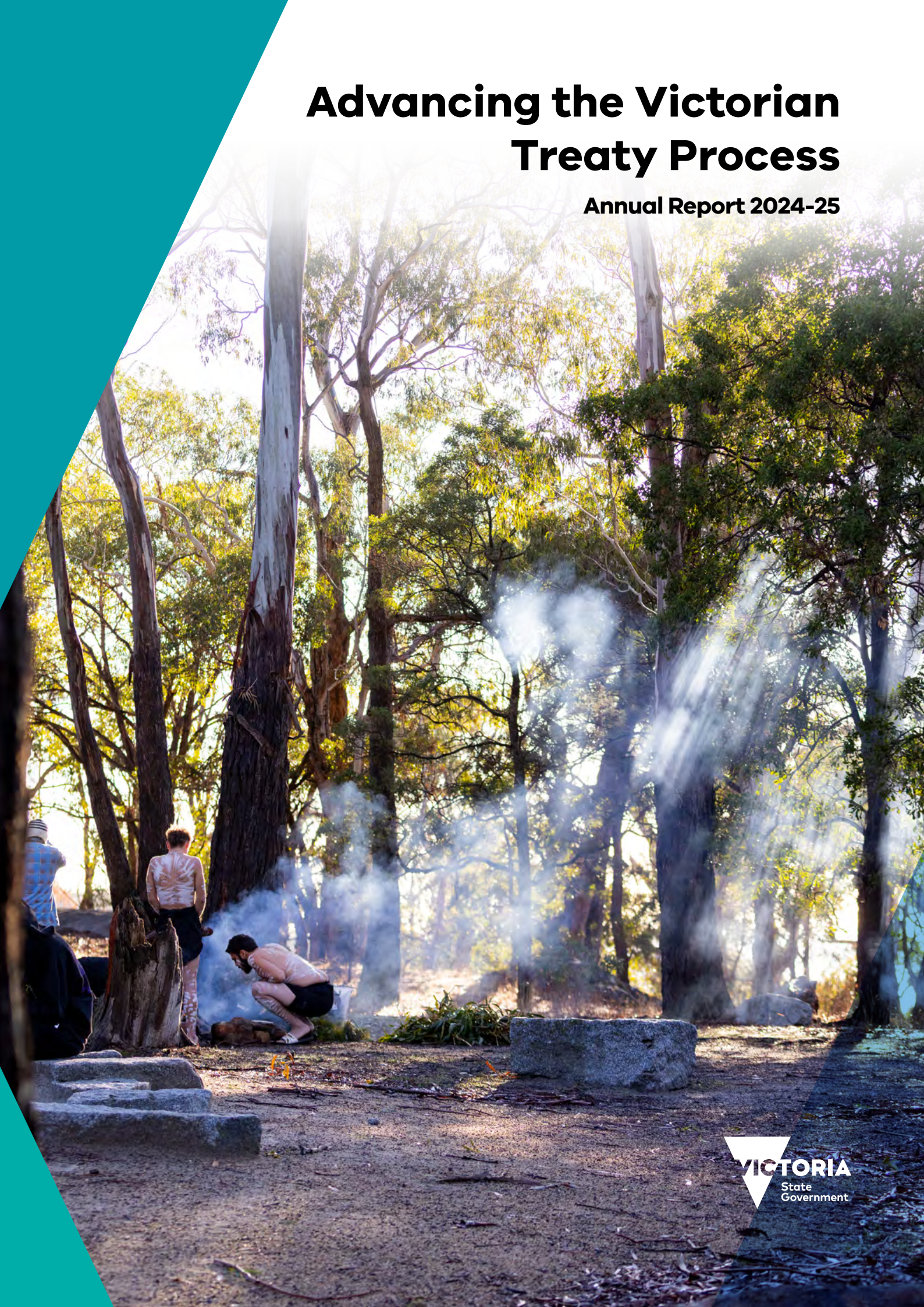


# Advancing the Victorian Treaty Process

Annual Report 2024-25







Ceremony at the opening of Statewide Treaty negotiations, Wurundjeri Country November 2024  
Photograph taken by Leroy Miller

# Contents

<b>Acknowledgement of Country</b>	<b>2</b>
Statutory context and reporting requirement	3
<b>Message from the Minister</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Achievements in Victoria’s Treaty Process</b>	<b>6</b>
Opening of the Negotiations Database	6
Meeting Minimum Standards under the Treaty Negotiation Framework	6
Statewide Treaty negotiations open	8
Progress of Statewide Treaty negotiations	10
First Traditional Owner group registered on the Negotiations Database	11
<b>Keeping Victorians informed about Treaty</b>	<b>12</b>
Treaty is for all Victorians	12
<b>The First Peoples’ Assembly</b>	<b>14</b>
A representative body for First Peoples in Victoria	14
<b>The Treaty Authority</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Truth-telling: Yoorrook Justice Commission</b>	<b>16</b>
Australia’s first formal truth-telling process	17
How truth-telling will inform Treaty	17
Government’s engagement with truth-telling	18
Delivery of final reports and official public record	19
<b>Victoria’s Whole of Government approach to Treaty</b>	<b>20</b>
Coordinated decision-making across all areas of State Government	20
Preparing the Victorian Public Service for Treaty	20
<b>The Path Ahead</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>Appendix: Pathway to Treaty in Victoria</b>	<b>22</b>





## Acknowledgement of Country

We proudly acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country across all lands and waters now known as the State of Victoria. We pay respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Victoria and those who have previously lived in Victoria. We pay respect to their families, communities, Elders and Ancestors. Victorian traditional owners maintain that their sovereignty has never been ceded.

We acknowledge and pay our respects to the ongoing strength and resilience of First Peoples, First Peoples' cultures, knowledge systems and traditions, and the immeasurable value added to Victoria's identity, culture and heritage by the oldest living cultures in the world. We cannot truly understand this State's history, or who we are as Victorians, without first understanding the deep, rich and complex cultural heritage of First Peoples.

We acknowledge the wide-ranging and intergenerational consequences of colonisation and dispossession, against which First Peoples have long fought. Colonisation involved profound wrongs, including widespread and horrific violence; removal of children; dispossession of Country and culture; and institutionalisation within systems built on racist beliefs.

We acknowledge all those who have advocated for their rights in the face of these historic and ongoing injustices. We also acknowledge the First Peoples who have told their truth so that we can understand the injustices and impacts of colonisation. The strength of all First Peoples has led us toward Treaty and truth.

To overcome the harms caused by colonisation, we need to understand how it was created and how it continues. We cannot re-write history, but the work arising out of truth, Treaty, and justice is where we act on this acknowledgement and begin to right the wrongs of the past and address ongoing injustices.

## Statutory context and reporting requirement

In August 2018, the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* (Vic) (*Advancing the Treaty Act*) became law, having passed through both houses of the Victorian Parliament in June 2018. Under the *Advancing the Treaty Act*, the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples (formerly the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs) is required to prepare an annual report on the work of the State of Victoria (State) in advancing the Treaty process. The reporting requirements are set out in Part 8 of the *Advancing the Treaty Act*.

The Treaty Negotiation Framework (Framework), agreed between the State and First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (First Peoples' Assembly) in

October 2022, reaffirms that this annual reporting requirement will include updates on the status of Treaty negotiations and agreements (clause 34.1).

This document constitutes the Minister's annual report for the 2024-25 financial year.

Part 8 of the *Advancing the Treaty Act* and clause 34.1 of the Framework also require the First Peoples' Assembly to report annually on its work in advancing the Treaty process. The First Peoples' Assembly's annual report will be a separate document.

These reporting requirements ensure that Victorians are transparently informed each year of the work to advance Treaty in Victoria.

Dawn Smoking Ceremony to open regional negotiations,  
Convincing Ground, Gunditjmara Country  
March 2025



## Message from the Minister

It is an honour to present the Treaty Annual Report 2024-25 as Minister for Treaty and First Peoples. The past year has been a milestone year for Treaty in Victoria. Victoria started our journey towards Treaty in 2016 and this year the First Peoples' Assembly and Victorian Government commenced Statewide Treaty negotiations and are on track to agree Australia's first Treaty.

It is important that we acknowledge the work of the First Peoples' Assembly, the democratically elected body representing First Peoples in the Treaty process. This year the First Peoples' Assembly have continued their extensive engagement work with First Peoples across the State and are representing their communities at the Statewide Treaty negotiations table.

This year, the Yoorrook Justice Commission (Commission) completed its historic inquiry. As Australia's first formal truth-telling process into the impacts of colonisation on First Peoples, the Commission heard extensive evidence of the historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria and how this continues to have impacts today. In its final reports and official public record released on 1 July 2025, the Commission makes findings on the historical events and government policies that have - and continue to - negatively impact First Peoples in Victoria. The official public record also shows the many ways in which First Peoples continue to demonstrate strength and innovation in practicing their culture and asserting their rights. The Commission's work will have a lasting legacy, deepening all Victorians' understanding of our shared history.

I thank the Commissioners for their work and acknowledge the resilience and resistance of First Peoples who shared their lived experiences with the Commission. Their strength helps us understand our shared history from the perspective of First Peoples and reaffirms the Victorian Government's commitment to ensure that Treaty provides a pathway to practical changes and solutions.

Our history – individual and collective – impacts our present. Informed by the Commission's work, Treaty will help us change what isn't working.

We know that programs and services led by First Peoples are the best way to close the gap, because laws and policies work best when the people affected by them have a say in how they work. Treaty negotiations have included conversations on the evolution of the First Peoples' Assembly into an ongoing representative body, ongoing truth-telling and implementing the accountability mechanism under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap.

We are negotiating Treaty on behalf of all Victorians. Treaty will bring us together and make Victoria stronger and more fairer than ever before.



### **The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP**

Minister for Government Services

Minister for Treaty and First Peoples

Minister for Prevention of Family Violence

Minister for Women



The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP at the opening of Statewide Treaty negotiations, Wurundjeri Country November 2024



# Achievements in Victoria's Treaty Process

In Victoria, we have been on the Treaty and truth path for nearly a decade. We have passed legislation twice, developed policies, and made commitments across every level of government.

We have taken the time required to lay strong foundations for Treaty. During 2024-25 the State and the First Peoples' Assembly have continued to make significant progress towards Treaty in Victoria. These strong foundations, the First Peoples' Assembly, Treaty Authority, Self-Determination Fund and the Treaty Negotiation Framework, have resulted in the opening of the Treaty Negotiations Database, the commencement of Statewide Treaty negotiations between the State and the First Peoples' Assembly and the first Traditional Owner group registering to negotiate a local, Traditional Owner Treaty with the State.

## Opening of the Negotiations Database

On 2 July 2024 we took a step forward towards Treaty with the Treaty Authority's opening of the Treaty Negotiations Database.

The Treaty Authority, the independent umpire supporting Treaty negotiations, will keep the Negotiations Database up to date with information about who is negotiating a Treaty and the areas over which Treaties are being negotiated. The Negotiations Database is publicly available on the Treaty Authority's website with an interactive map showing both Statewide and Traditional Owner Treaties.



## Meeting Minimum Standards under the Treaty Negotiation Framework

On 17 July 2024 the First Peoples' Assembly notified the Treaty Authority that it had met the Framework's Minimum Standards for representing First Peoples in Statewide Treaty negotiations. The First Peoples' Assembly confirmed how it represents the diversity of First Peoples in Victoria through its membership and community engagement processes. The Treaty Authority entered the First Peoples' Assembly onto the Negotiations Database as the First Peoples' Representative Body for Statewide Treaty negotiations.

At the Statewide Treaty Negotiations Opening on 21 November 2024 the Treaty Authority announced that the State of Victoria had met the Minimum Standards under the Framework and demonstrated that it was ready to commence Statewide Treaty negotiations.

The Minimum Standards are important to ensure that a commitment from the State to negotiate a Statewide Treaty is made public. Meeting the Minimum Standards represented that the State had undertaken the required preparatory work and was ready to begin formal negotiations. The Treaty Authority, as the independent body, assessed that the State had met its requirements.

"Treaty is our chance to build a stronger Victoria. A Victoria where Aboriginal people have a say over the policies and programs that impact their lives."

– Premier, Hon. Jacinta Allan MP

Assembly Co-Chair Ngarra Murray, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, Assembly Co-Chair Rueben Berg, Premier, Hon. Jacinta Allan MP and Sheena Watt MP at opening of Statewide Treaty negotiations, Wurundjeri Country November 2024.

"Whether it's caring for land and keeping culture strong or improving the way services like health and education are delivered at a local level, we want to negotiate a Treaty that will empower Aboriginal communities for generations to come."

– Rueben Berg, First Peoples' Assembly Co-Chair



Djeetgung Girls, performing at the opening of Statewide Treaty negotiations, Wurundjeri Country November 2024



Statewide Treaty negotiations open

The Victorian Government and First Peoples' Assembly made history on 21 November 2024 with the opening of negotiations for Australia's first Treaty.

To mark this significant occasion, the Victorian Government and First Peoples' Assembly hosted a ceremony at Darebin Parklands on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country.

The event brought together senior members of the Victorian Government and the Aboriginal community, from across Victoria, to celebrate First Peoples' culture and look forward towards the Treaty journey ahead.

Attendees included Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Margaret Gardner AC, the Premier and Victorian Government Ministers, First Peoples' Assembly Co-Chairs and Members, Treaty Authority Members, Yoorrook Justice Commissioners, Traditional Owners and representatives from across the First Peoples community.

The strong display of Aboriginal culture and ceremony was a fitting start to Treaty negotiations that mark a new beginning in First Peoples-State relations. A relationship through which the two meet, on equal standing, to negotiate a Treaty that will make all Victorians proud.

Victoria's Treaty is about First Peoples developing and delivering solutions at the local level and is a practical way to create a fairer Victoria.

"I commit to working towards a future, through Treaty, where self-determination is not an aspiration, but a reality for First Peoples. A future where First Peoples and the State come together in partnership to meet the opportunities and challenges of tomorrow."

- The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, Minister for Treaty and First Peoples

"Treaty is from the ground up and talking to our communities at every step. We are ready, we are prepared, and we look forward to a better future for our children, families and communities."

- Ngarra Murray, First Peoples' Assembly Co-Chair



Above: Opening of Statewide Treaty negotiations, Wurundjeri Country November 2024



Left: The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP with Treaty Authority Members Dr Petah Atkinson and Jidah Clark at the opening of Statewide Treaty negotiations, Wurundjeri Country November 2024

Opening of regional negotiations at Bendigo

On 11 June 2025, the Premier, Hon. Jacinta Allan MP attended a ceremony opening a regional negotiation with the First Peoples' Assembly on Dja Dja Wurrung Country.

Following the opening ceremony, negotiations emphasised the nation-leading work of the Yoorrook Justice Commission and the importance of ongoing truth-telling across local communities. Parties discussed the significance of the official public record being created by the Yoorrook Justice Commission, and that this could be a valuable resource for teachers to use when educating students about Victoria's history



Opening of regional negotiations, Dja Dja Wurrung Country June 2025



Progress of Statewide Treaty negotiations

The First Peoples’ Assembly and the Victorian Government have made significant progress towards a Treaty agreement. Since November, weekly negotiations have focused on securing a foundation for Treaty in Victoria that recognises the relationship between the State and First Peoples.

The Victorian Government is represented at the negotiating table by senior Department of Premier and Cabinet executives, and the First Peoples’ Assembly is represented by appointed Member Negotiators.

Victorian law, the *Advancing the Treaty Act and Treaty Authority and Other Treaty Elements Act 2022 (Treaty Authority Act)*, underpin how Treaty is negotiated. The Treaty Negotiation Framework is the rulebook that sets out how Treaty negotiations will work.

The Victorian Government is committed to the transparency of the Treaty process. All agreements made on the path to Treaty are publicly available and the Victorian Government will continue to release Joint Statements on negotiations with the First Peoples’ Assembly.

The Joint Statements have noted that Treaty negotiations have focused on:

- Evolving the existing First Peoples’ Assembly into an ongoing representative body
- This has included talks on governance and oversight of the representative body, its role in decision-making in relation to Victorian Government programs and services for First Peoples and the interaction between the representative body and the Victorian Parliament and Government. These conversations are important as bodies made up of First Peoples, elected by community such as the First Peoples’ Assembly are vital to delivering practical change.

- Work to support ongoing truth-telling, education, healing and reconciliation in Victoria

This has included how to continue the truth-telling journey after the conclusion of the Yoorrook Justice Commission – how to capture stories from across the Victorian community about the history and experiences of First Peoples, retain an archive of information and truth-telling as a form of public education on the history of Victoria.

- Implementing the accountability mechanism under the National Agreement on Closing the Gap

This has included how a new independent accountability mechanism can hold the State accountable to obligations to improve outcomes for First Peoples under the National Agreement to Close the Gap.

First Traditional Owner group registered on the Negotiations Database

On 28 May 2025, the Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owner Group became the first Traditional Owner Group to be registered by the Treaty Authority on the Treaty Negotiations Database. Registration is an important first step in the process towards commencing local, Traditional Owner Treaty negotiations in the future between the State and Traditional Owners in Victoria.

Under the Treaty Negotiation Framework, Victoria’s Treaty process includes both an overarching Statewide Treaty and Traditional Owner Treaties.

Traditional Owner Treaty Negotiations will be led by a First Peoples’ Treaty Delegation comprising all Traditional Owners seeking to negotiate a Treaty over the area of land and waters identified. Traditional Owners will work together to form a First Peoples’ delegation, guided by the principle of inclusivity, to conduct Treaty negotiations as a collective. Local Treaties will recognise Victoria’s Traditional Owner groups and provide a process to address local needs and interests.

Regional negotiations at Portland

In March 2025, the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, attended a regional negotiation with the First Peoples’ Assembly Negotiation Delegation on Gunditjmara Country.

The meeting took place at a site known as the Convincing Ground at Allestree at Portland Bay. The name of the site references a massacre of the Kilcarer Gundidj clan by whalers which took place in 1834. The site was significant to discussions on how Treaty could progress truth and reconciliation, building on the nation-leading work of the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

After the negotiations the Minister met with Elders from the Winda-Mara Aboriginal Corporation and Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owner Corporation at Dhauwurd-Wurrung Elderly and Community Health Service. This meeting provided the important opportunity to discuss how Treaty could benefit regional communities.

Opening of regional negotiations at Convincing Ground, Gunditjmara Country March 2025





# Keeping Victorians informed about Treaty

## Treaty is for all Victorians

The Victorian Government is keeping Victorians updated and engaged as we progress on the path to Treaty.

## Treaty Stakeholder Engagement Program

In 2024–25, the Victorian Government hosted 13 Treaty information sessions with more than 750 local leaders across the state to build understanding and awareness about Treaty.

The Victorian Government partnered with local councils across the state. We also co-hosted sessions with the Victorian Council of Social Services and the Victorian Multicultural Commission. Information sessions were held in Shepparton, Keilor, Broadmeadows, Frankston, Horsham, Geelong, Springvale, Melbourne CBD, St Albans, Torquay, Warrnambool, Bairnsdale and online.

Community representatives had the opportunity to hear from the Minister for Treaty and First Peoples and the Parliamentary Secretary for First Peoples about the foundations for Treaty and ask questions to understand how Treaty could impact their communities. Participants received written materials to support community understanding of Treaty and were invited to receive regular email updates on the progress of Treaty in Victoria.

## Joint Statements on negotiations

The State and First Peoples' Assembly issue Joint Statements on Treaty negotiations to keep Victorians informed about the progress of Treaty negotiations.

Joint Statements were issued on 13 January 2025, 21 March 2025 and 18 June 2025 with updates to the subject matters under negotiation.

Joint Statements are available at [www.premier.vic.gov.au](http://www.premier.vic.gov.au).

## Treaty website and email program

The Treaty Victoria website provides information about Victoria's Treaty.

The website includes an option to sign-up to an opt-in email program. Subscribers to the email program receive regular Treaty update emails that contain explainers, resources and information about the progress of negotiations.

You can access the Treaty Victoria website at [www.treatyvic.gov.au](http://www.treatyvic.gov.au)



The Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, speaking at the State Library of Victoria Treaty engagement forum, Wurundjeri Country February 2025



# The First Peoples' Assembly

## A representative body for First Peoples in Victoria

The First Peoples' Assembly has been operating since 2019. It is the independent, democratically elected body representing First Peoples in Victoria's Treaty process. Since 2024, the First Peoples' Assembly has represented First Peoples at the Statewide Treaty negotiating table.

The First Peoples' Assembly is comprised of 33 Victorian Traditional Owners. Twenty-two members of the First Peoples' Assembly are elected by First Peoples across five voting regions and 11 members currently hold seats reserved for recognised Traditional Owner groups.

## Community Engagement on Statewide Treaty

In 2024-25, the First Peoples' Assembly has undertaken extensive engagement with First Peoples on Treaty. It held a Statewide Treaty Forum and community forums across Victoria in order to come to the table and present State negotiators with Treaty proposals put forward by Aboriginal communities.

The First Peoples' Assembly also hosted 'Treaty Day Out' in Morwell on Gunaikurnai Country on 8 February 2025 and 'Treaty in the Park' in Werribee on Wadawurrung Country on 24 November 2024.

Further information on the community engagement completed by the First Peoples' Assembly can be found in the First Peoples' Assembly Annual Report 2024-25.



Parliamentarians, Commissioners of the Yoorrook Justice Commission, Assembly and Treaty Authority members at an event at Parliament House, Wurundjeri Country September 2024

## Administering the Self-Determination Fund

The Self-Determination Fund is an independent fund established under the Advancing the Treaty Act and administered by the First Peoples' Assembly. The Self-Determination Fund has two purposes; to ensure that First Peoples have equal standing with the State in Treaty negotiations and to empower First Peoples to build capacity, wealth and prosperity for present and future generations.

The Victorian Government has provided \$65 million to the fund to support Traditional Owners to have equal standing with the State in the negotiation of Traditional Owner Treaties.

In 2024-25, the Self-Determination Fund has announced grants to 21 Traditional Owner groups to explore and form their aspirations for Treaty.

For further information visit [selfdeterminationfund.org.au](https://selfdeterminationfund.org.au)

# The Treaty Authority

The Treaty Authority is the independent umpire that supports Treaty negotiations. It ensures that negotiations follow the rules set out by the Treaty Negotiation Framework and upholds and observes Aboriginal Lore, Law and Cultural Authority in the Treaty Process. The Treaty Authority Act, which recognises the Treaty Authority's establishment, was passed by Parliament in August 2022

The Treaty Authority is composed of five First Peoples members. In December 2023 the inaugural members were appointed: Dr Petah Atkinson, Thelma Austin, Jidah Clark, Andrew Morgan Jackomos PSM and Duean White.

The Treaty Authority's first year and a half of operations focused on developing the

Negotiations Database, dispute resolution processes and supporting Traditional Owners to prepare to negotiate Traditional Owner Treaties.

For further information please see the Treaty Authority website at [treatyauthority.au](https://treatyauthority.au).

## Treaty and truth Parliamentary lunch

In August 2024, the First Peoples' Assembly and the State co-hosted a Treaty and truth lunch at Parliament House. The lunch was an opportunity for Parliamentarians to meet with members of First Peoples' Treaty and truth-telling bodies including the First Peoples' Assembly, Treaty Authority and Yoorrook Justice Commission and reflect on the progress made on the path to Treaty and truth-telling. The event also enabled Treaty and truth-telling bodies to update Parliamentarians on their work to ensure they can keep their communities informed on the Treaty and truth-telling journey.



Announcement of the Treaty Authority members, Ngarra Murray, Duean White, Jidah Clark, Dr Petah Atkinson, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP, Uncle Andrew Jackomos, Thelma Austin and Rueben Berg, Wurundjeri Country December 2023



# Truth-telling: Yoorrook Justice Commission



Yoorrook Deputy Chair Travis Lovett speaking at the last day of the Walk for Truth, Wurundjeri Country, June 2025



Descendants Day hearing, Dr Katrina Kell giving evidence, Wurundjeri Country September 2024  
Photograph: Evan Schuurman, owned by Yoorrook Justice Commission, used with permission.

## Australia's first formal truth-telling process

The Yoorrook Justice Commission was jointly established by the First Peoples' Assembly and the Victorian Government in May 2021 in direct response to long-standing calls from First Peoples for truth telling. The Commission's groundbreaking role was to investigate the historical and ongoing systemic injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria since colonisation.

### Descendants Day and completion of hearings

The Yoorrook Justice Commission held a Descendants Day hearing on 4 September 2024 to receive evidence from non-Indigenous witnesses on massacres of First Peoples in Victoria in the 1830s and 1840s and laws that played a key role in the Stolen Generations. Three witnesses gave evidence, including two descendants of early colonial figures who spoke to the role of their families in Victoria's colonisation and the impact that their families' actions have had on First Peoples.

## How truth-telling will inform Treaty

Truth-telling is a critical component of Victoria's Treaty process. Without understanding our history, we cannot understand how inequality was created and continues. A key focus of Treaty discussions in 2024-25 has been how ongoing truth-telling can be embedded in Treaty outcomes after the completion of the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

A number of the Commission's recommendations were made for implementation through the Treaty process and will continue to inform negotiations, consistent with the Treaty Negotiation Framework.





Crowd listening to speakers at the last day of the Walk for Truth, Wurundjeri Country June 2025

## Government's engagement with truth-telling

Throughout 2024-25, the State continued its work to respond to and support the Commission's inquiry. The State remained committed to a genuine and transparent response to the truth-telling process. This included the State releasing the Victorian Government Implementation Progress Report: Yoorrook for Justice in October 2024, providing updated implementation information on the 46 recommendations made by the Commission in the 2023 Yoorrook for Justice interim report.

In response to recommendations made by the Commission in its interim reports on Indigenous Data Sovereignty, the Inquiries Amendment (*Yoorrook Justice Commission Records and Other Matters*) Act 2025 was passed on 18 February 2025 to enable the Commission to uphold First Peoples' choices on the post-inquiry treatment of their evidence. The Act received Royal assent and was enacted on 25 February 2025.

Over the course of the Commission's inquiry, across seven distinct hearing blocks, 15 Victorian Government Ministers provided evidence to the Commission, and State witnesses provided more than 20 written statements to assist the Commission with its proceedings. The State also produced over 7,000 documents in response to the Commission.

## Delivery of final reports and official public record

The Yoorrook Justice Commission's final reports were publicly released on 1 July 2025, marking the end of its four-year inquiry. The third interim report, *Yoorrook for Transformation*, contained findings from the Commission's lines of inquiry into Land Injustice and Social Injustice and made 100 recommendations for systemic reform. The final report, *Truth Be Told*, was historically focused, containing the Commission's official public record based on First Peoples' experiences of systemic injustice since the start of colonisation.

In the lead up to the release of the final reports Deputy Chair Commissioner Travis Lovett walked 370km from Gunditjmara Country in Portland

to the Victorian Parliament on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country on the Walk for Truth. Along the journey to Parliament, Commissioner Lovett stopped in Warrnambool, Colac, Geelong and Footscray to meet with communities and discuss the Commission's work and findings.

The walk was a generous invitation from the Commission to all Victorians to learn about the truths informing the Commission's findings, to talk about our history and to work together to change our shared future.

Thousands of Victorians joined Deputy Chair Commissioner Lovett on the walk, which culminated in a public event and community celebration of the Commission's work on 18 June 2025.



# Victoria's Whole of Government approach to Treaty

## Coordinated decision-making across all areas of State Government

The Victorian Government has been progressing Treaty for nearly a decade, taking the time required to establish and implement policy and processes that underpin Treaty. This includes passing the Advancing the Treaty Act and Treaty Authority Act, which provide the foundation for Treaty negotiations.

In 2024-25, the Victorian Government took a coordinated approach to progressing Treaty working across all areas of government, including:

- Continuing strong governance structures and authorisation pathways to ensure Treaty negotiations can progress and government can be responsive to Treaty outcomes
- Having dedicated Treaty roles across all Victorian Public Service departments and Victoria Police to support Treaty preparedness and negotiations
- Supporting Victorian Public Service employees to participate in a Treaty Education program



Hon. Premier Jacinta Allan MP speaking at a Parliamentary lunch at Parliament House, Wurundjeri Country September 2024

## Preparing the Victorian Public Service for Treaty

The Department of Premier and Cabinet's Treaty Education Program aims to build understanding of Treaty across the Victorian Public Service.

As of June 2025, DPC has supported 439 members of the public service to undertake at least one of the 'Understanding Treaty Micro-Credentials' delivered by the University of Melbourne.

Content of the Micro-Credentials focuses on improving learners understanding of treaties between First Peoples and States. This includes looking at international historical and contemporary examples of the roles of treaties and how international treaties could be applied in a local context.

Embedding an understanding of principles that will underpin Treaty will help public sector employees to perform their roles when Statewide Treaty is achieved.



Assembly Co-Chair Ngarra Murray, the Hon. Natalie Hutchins MP and Assembly Co-Chair Rueben Berg, Wurundjeri Country

# The Path Ahead

Treaty is about making a better and fairer state for every Victorian.

The Treaty process is the key mechanism to enable self-determination for First Peoples in Victoria.

In 2025-26, the Victorian Government will continue to work with the First Peoples' Assembly to ensure that Treaty negotiations continue to meet the principles of the Advancing the Treaty Act.

Treaty will bring the Victorian community together by building a shared future and pride in the Aboriginal heritage of this land that is our home, and closing the gap by ensuring First Peoples make decisions for First Peoples.

The Victorian Government looks forward to further progressing Statewide and Traditional Owner Treaties and realising a renewed relationship between First Peoples and the State.



Opening of Statewide Treaty negotiations, Wurundjeri Country November 2024



## Appendix: Pathway to Treaty in Victoria

● 2016

○ **2016: Commitment to Treaty.**

The Victorian Government commits to progressing Treaty and establishes the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group.

● 2018

○ **2018: Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission (VTAC).**

VTAC commences operation and leads community consultations on the Victorian Treaty process.

○ **2018: Advancing the Treaty Act.**

The law sets out the Treaty elements required to support fair and effective Treaty negotiations in Victoria: the Treaty Authority, the Self-Determination Fund, the Treaty Negotiation Framework, and a dispute resolution process. It provides for an Aboriginal Representative Body, the First Peoples' Assembly, a community elected body tasked with establishing the Treaty elements by agreement with the State of Victoria.

● 2019

○ **2019: The First Peoples' Assembly.**

The inaugural members of the First Peoples' Assembly are elected to represent First Peoples in Victoria's Treaty process.

● 2022

○ **2022: The Treaty Authority Act and Agreement.**

These establish the Treaty Authority, a First Peoples' led body that will operate as an independent umpire to facilitate Treaty negotiations and resolve any disputes that may arise.

○ **2022: The Treaty Negotiation Framework.**

This sets out the rules, process and subjects for negotiating Treaties between the State of Victoria and First Peoples.

○ **2022: The Self-Determination Fund.**

The 2022-23 State Budget invests \$65 million over three years to establish and makes an initial payment towards the Self-Determination Fund. Under the Advancing the Treaty Act, the Self-Determination Fund supports Aboriginal parties to have equal standing with the State in Treaty negotiations and provides a financial resource, independent from the State, that empowers First Peoples to build capacity, wealth and prosperity.

● 2023

○ **2023: First Peoples' Assembly's second general election.**

The Second Chamber of the First Peoples' Assembly is elected. First Peoples' Assembly elections are held every four years.

○ **2023: Appointment of Members to the Treaty Authority.**

Five inaugural Members are appointed to the Treaty Authority to oversee the upcoming Treaty negotiations.

○ **2023: Self-Determination Fund is operational.**

The Self-Determination Fund opened applications for funding to empower Traditional Owner groups in Victoria to become 'Treaty ready'.

● 2024

○ **July 2024: Opening of the Negotiations Database and entry of the First Peoples' Assembly**

On 2 July 2024, the Treaty Authority opened the Negotiations Database, enabling parties to Treaty negotiations to be added. On 17 July 2024, the First Peoples' Assembly was entered into the Negotiations Database by the Treaty Authority as the body to negotiate Statewide Treaty.

○ **November 2024: State meets Minimum Standards and Opening of Treaty negotiations**

On 21 November 2024, the negotiation of Australia's first treaty began with a ceremony hosted by the First Peoples' Assembly and the Victorian Government at Darebin Parklands, on Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Country. At the event, the Treaty Authority announced that the State had been entered into the Negotiations Database and met the Minimum Standards provided at clause 20.2 of the Framework and the Additional Preparations provided at clause 20.3 of the Framework.

● 2025

○ **January 2025: Release of the first Joint Statement**

The Victorian Government in partnership with the First Peoples' Assembly released the first Joint Statement on Treaty negotiations, informing the public on the progress of negotiations including the focus for negotiations in 2025.

○ **March 2025: First regional negotiations held at Convincing Ground, Portland**

The first regional negotiations between the First Peoples' Assembly and the State was held at the Convincing Ground in Portland on Gunditjmara Country.

○ **March 2025: Release of the second Joint Statement**

The Victorian Government in partnership with the First Peoples' Assembly released the second Joint Statement on Treaty negotiations, informing the public on the progress of negotiations. This joint statement included updates capturing stories from across the Victorian community of the history and experiences of First Peoples, retaining an archive of this information and public education opportunities, and discussion on continuing the truth-telling journey after the conclusion of the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

○ **May 2025: First Traditional Owner group registered on the Negotiations Database**

On 28 May 2025, the Treaty Authority notified the public that the Dja Dja Wurrung Traditional Owner Group was registered to the Treaty Negotiations Database. Dja Dja Wurrung, being the first Traditional Owner group registered to the Negotiations Database, marked progress towards the beginning of Traditional Owner Treaty negotiations in Victoria.

○ **June 2025: Release of the third Joint Statement**

The Victorian Government in partnership with the First Peoples' Assembly released the third Joint Statement on Treaty negotiations, updating the public on regional negotiations held in Bendigo.

○ **June 2025: Release of Yoorrook Justice Commission final report**

On 30 June 2025, the Yoorrook Justice Commission provided its final report and public record on the historic and current injustice faced by First Peoples in Victoria. The report was publicly released on 1 July 2025. This marked the completion of the four-year inquiry which heard and received evidence from First Peoples and non-Indigenous people across the State.





# VICTORIA'S TREATY



