



SUBMISSION TO THE

INDEPENDENT EXPERT PANEL ON INTERIM TARGETS

13 December 2018

A Renewable Energy Roadmap for Victorian Traditional Owner Groups

Introduction

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations is the peak body representing the interests of Victorian Traditional Owners who have or are in the process of gaining recognition under the *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth), *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic) or the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic).

In Victoria under the Traditional Owner Settlement legislation, Traditional Owner groups from across the State are being recognised and settling with the State to own, manage or use natural resources and to develop economic and investment opportunities and for participation in the development of policy. This is formally required through the Recognition and Settlement Agreement between groups and the State.

Traditional Owners have a unique set of roles and functions, with both legal and cultural rights and responsibilities. An holistic world view and a values-driven and long term and intergenerational perspective, require recognition of integrated social, cultural, environmental and economic outcomes. This is increasingly being seen in the State's policy requirements for self-determination, for partnerships and procurement, or outcomes across the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework, and in key policies such as biodiversity, the State Water Plan and in acknowledging opportunities for cultural fire.

Traditional Owners have been managing the landscapes of what we now call Victoria for over 40,000 years. During this time the climate changed and the landscapes and biodiversity changed, and Traditional Owners adapted. Traditional Owners are actively managing parts of their Country and continue to adapt their practices in response to climate change. Traditional Owner knowledge has a long history and can make great contributions to both climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Focus of submission

While we acknowledge that the Panel's terms of reference refer to socio-economic groups and vulnerable communities, we believe that specific reference needs to be given to the First Peoples of Victoria, as the traditional guardians of the lands which Victoria now covers.

Our submission focuses on the third aspect of the Panel's work – **Potential opportunities** across the Victorian economy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the most cost-effective manner in each interim target period.

Potential Opportunity

- Support opportunities for Victorian Traditional Owner Groups to participate in and benefit from the growth of the renewable energy sector
- Commit resources to the development of a Victorian Traditional Owner Renewable Energy Roadmap, including partnership development and feasibility studies for renewable energy investment opportunities to be owned or co-owned by Traditional Owner entities

A key way to support the reduction of greenhouse gases is through the renewable energy sector. Investment in renewable energy is accelerating at an unprecedented rate in Victoria due to strong leadership and commitment to Victorian renewable energy targets (VRETs). Traditional Owners are a potential partner in developing renewable energy action, where there is potentially access to land, investment and partnerships.

A dedicated Roadmap would ensure that opportunities for Traditional Owners to participate and invest in the Renewable Energy market are identified early, before the best opportunities and profits are taken.

A Victorian Traditional Owner Renewable Energy Roadmap would:

- guide and develop a basis for a cohesive approach, potentially integrated across the State.
- opportunities for Victorian Traditional Owner Groups to participate in and benefit from the growth of the renewable energy sector
- give focus to, partnership development and feasibility studies for renewable energy investment opportunities to be owned or co-owned by Traditional Owner entities

A dedicated Roadmap would assist to:

- develop information and capacity to enable full participation of Traditional Owner Groups and give effect to the State's principles for self-determination
- promote recognition of Traditional Owner interests, and contribute to achieving equity in outcomes
- strategically deploy resources towards these opportunities and to achievement of the VRETs and emissions reduction targets
- strengthen sustainability of Traditional Owner communities through jobs, income and investment, as well as objectives and drivers in Caring for Country
- connect Traditional Owners to developments where State investment requires a social dividend.

The approach of a Traditional Owner Roadmap would:

- fit with the current development of regionally based Roadmaps
- provide support to overcome the need for high levels of 'renewable energy literacy' to know where the opportunities lie, ways of entering the market and systems to manage the ensuing business opportunities
- strengthen regional development and investment, as Traditional Owner groups are based largely in regional Victoria where renewable energy projects are more likely to be found
- build on the long-term partnerships and interests of Traditional Owners for investment and jobs in their Country, and offering business diversity consistent with environmental protection.

Contact: Dr Moragh Mackay, Senior Policy Advisor, Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations, M: 0418969083, E: Moragh.mackay@fvtoc.com.au .