

# Media Release



## **TRADITIONAL OWNER GROUPS CALL FOR BIPARTISAN SUPPORT ON TREATY**

FAILURE to obtain bipartisan support for Treaty in Victoria would greatly let down its First Peoples and be a missed opportunity to create a defining moment in Australia's history.

This is the message from Traditional Owner groups throughout Victoria as they call for unanimous support from all political parties to back the current Advancing The Treaty Process Bill.

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations' (FVTOC) member groups are calling for united support on Treaty. Together these Traditional Owner groups have the recognition and legal rights and interests over nearly three-quarters of the state of Victoria, signifying the broad support for this Bill.

Federation CEO Marcus Stewart stressed that The Bill in its current form does not legislate the outcomes of a Treaty, nor does it exclude anyone from the process, it simply outlines a framework for future Treaty negotiations between all Aboriginal Victorians and the State of Victoria and that it is important that the process remains open for Traditional Owners to determine the outcome.

Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation CEO Matthew Burns said Treaty is an opportunity for politicians to demonstrate that they acknowledge, support and respect the Traditional Owners.

"We as the Taungurung Nation support the Treaty Bill as it provides the platform to acknowledge and cement our status, culture and history upon the state of Victoria," Mr Burns said.

"It means a great deal to the Traditional Owners to see the Bill progress through parliament.

"Should this Bill fail it would be a great step backwards not only for Treaty, but for the way in which our politicians view the Traditional Owners of this land."

The Treaty Bill is the culmination of the work of more than 7,000 Aboriginal community members who have been engaged to work with government to progress Treaty over the past two years.

It will either need the support of the Australian Labor Party and Liberal Nationals Party to pass or the Australian Labor Party, the Greens and the Independent MPs.

Eastern Maar CEO Jamie Lowe, who recently returned from the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York, said there are lessons to be learnt from the international community.

“We can sit back and observe countries like Canada, who have just negotiated their ninth treaty while significant gaps for education, health and employment continue in Australia,” Mr Lowe said.

“The longer we sit back and observe, the longer the gap will remain.

“Victoria must seize the opportunity of this moment as Treaty will deliver so much for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians, allowing us to realise our aspirations for true self-determination.”

Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation CEO Rodney Carter said Traditional Owners would have a voice and greater respect of their recognition as First Peoples if this bill goes through.

He said Treaty can be seen as a method to resolve differences to an agreed standard with a shared outcome for all Victorians.

“All people will own this, and a successful Treaty that is shared by the majority positively defines our communities as a whole for the benefit of future generations,” Mr Carter said.

“We need all politicians to back Treaty so we can continue this journey to a defining moment in our history and stand united in justice with other First Nations internationally.”

FVTOC CEO Marcus Stewart said the support of the Federation’s members is evidence that Treaty is a priority for Traditional Owners in Victoria.

“This just reiterates the fact that people want a Treaty now more than ever,” Mr Stewart said.

“The Federation, with the backing of its members, sees bipartisan support as critical to the success of Treaty.

“Failure to obtain bipartisan support for Treaty and this Bill would be a significant failure by parliament, on behalf of its First Peoples.

“This is an enormous opportunity to right past wrongs and shape a better future for coming generations and provide for recognition and reconciliation between Aboriginal people, fellow Victorians and the state of Victoria.”

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*We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we work on as the First People of this country.*