



Friday 17 July, 2020

TRUTH AN ENABLING STEP TOWARDS JUSTICE

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations welcomes the Victorian Government's support for the establishment of a Truth and Justice Commission.

Clearly, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria are not wasting a moment in progressing the necessary building blocks for successful Treaty making, having voted to call for a truth-telling process less than a month ago.

Traditional Owners have been calling for such a process for many years, most recently as a key component of the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

Now, through the self-determining, democratic mandate of the First Peoples' Assembly, that call may finally be realised.

The Federation is wholly in favour of a truth-telling process, to shine a light on our true history as a state and as nation. After all, as George Santayana famously said: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it".

We need the impacts of past policies and injustices to be recognised and fully understood, in order to move forward together and make informed decisions for the betterment of us all.

As recent debates around Black Lives Matter and Aboriginal deaths in custody have again uncovered, there are many misunderstandings, myths and untruths in our public discourse, which we can only overcome through truth-telling and education.

For 60,000 years our people not just survived, but thrived. We are proud of that history and confident that all Victorians will benefit – not only from understanding the impacts of 200 years of colonial violence and discrimination – but from also learning of the richness of pre-colonial Aboriginal cultures, languages, knowledge and practice.

For generations, our education system has failed to deliver a true and accurate history of our peoples – by our peoples – and we are all poorer as a result.

A set of shared understandings emerging from the work of this commission could provide the basis for reform of school curriculums as a part of a Treaty.

We send our thanks and congratulations to all Traditional Owners who worked so hard to get us to this point and look forward to participating in further community consultations on the terms of reference of the proposed truth and justice commission.

www.fvtoc.com.au

Media Contact: Matt Landolfo – 0466 343 000 – matthew.landolfo@fvtoc.com.au