

# Media Release



## Government has forgotten that Traditional Owners have day jobs

24 May 2021

In the wake of the Victorian Budget, the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations welcomes the recent announcements, however, is deeply disappointed that the role of Traditional Owner Corporations and their day to day work has been missed out of the Budget.

*“While recognising the fundamental importance of Treaty and the establishment of the new Truth and Justice Commission, these are long term initiatives and in the mean time the day to day work of Traditional Owners and the increasing pressure to meet regulatory and government requirements has been completely missed out of the budget announcements today,”* CEO, Paul Paton said.

*“This budget fails to recognise the hard work that Traditional Owner Corporations undertake every day to build partnerships with government and the community to share their deep knowledge of Country and to contribute to the social and economic wellbeing across the State.”*

The investment in regional and metro areas across the State is significant, but until a solid foundation and the cultural authority for Country is properly recognised, Traditional Owners are simply subsidising government. Local and State agencies come knocking on the door every day seeking the knowledge and guidance of Traditional Owners, and its important that they do, but there’s a lack of balance in this process.

Failure to receive this support is a letdown on our First Peoples and once again creates a landscape where Traditional Owners are answering to government’s interests instead of driving their own. *“Its not sustainable and the government needs to get serious about backing Traditional Owners and the critical role in reading Country and bringing knowledge and deep insight to the government’s planning frameworks around bush fire, water and biodiversity for example,”* Mr Paton said.

“The Federation is also particularly concerned that the new Local Government Act specifically requires Councils to work with Traditional Owners, but the government’s budget has neglected to provide Traditional Owners with the means to undertake that function. This is just one example, and every day our members are dealing with similar issues around public land issues along water ways, the new marine and coastal legislation requirements, regional forest agreements, damage to cultural heritage, and the list goes on,” Mr Paton said.

The Federation calls on the government to redouble its efforts to bring the practicality back to the day-to-day implementation with the capacity to meet regulatory and planning frameworks and enable investment that properly recognises and harnesses Traditional Owners knowledge and authority on Country.

**For further comment or information please contact;**

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