**­­Media Statement**

**Wednesday 4 May 2022**

**2022/23 Victorian State Budget**

**The 2022/23 State Budget commitment to Traditional Owner rights and interests is an important acknowledgement of our relationship to Country, Cultural Heritage and traditional knowledge and practice.** We support the positive impact that the State Budget commitments will make on Victorian Traditional Owners, particularly:

**Support for Country wellbeing** through renewable energy, bushfire response and regeneration, water access and use, coastal and alpine initiatives and increasing support for the management of Barmah National Park is a good start but they must be all implemented through a processes of co-design with Traditional Owners.

**Support for Cultural wellbeing** through language reclamation and teaching and increased capacity of the Aboriginal Heritage Register and greater compliance regulation with the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* must also address associated rights and the absence of real Traditional Owner control in the Cultural Heritage system.

**Support for Community wellbeing** through the Stolen Generations Reparations Package, support for negotiating Traditional Owner Recognition and Settlement Agreements and further work on the review of the legislation, increased funding for Registered Aboriginal Parties is a prudent acknowledgment of the greater work needed to develop community capacity.

The Federation also strongly supports the Victorian Government’s commitment to Treaty in Victoria, recognising that it represents a significant opportunity to empower the Victorian Aboriginal and Traditional Owner community. However, we are also mindful that self-determination and the activation of rights and interests cannot simply be put on hold while waiting for Treaty.

While the 2022/23 Budget is an essential step in the process of post disaster recovery, we **note the absence in this Budget for resourcing on the ground implementation of foundation policies and strategies that could fundamentally change the way Traditional Owners’ rights, self-determination and control of their Country, Cultural Heritage and traditional knowledge and practice is acknowledged and implemented.**

As Traditional Owners, we will look to subsequent budgets to realise substantive implementation of the [*Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy*](https://www.fvtoc.com.au/game-management), [*Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscape Strategy*](https://www.fvtoc.com.au/cultural-landscapes)*,* [*Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy*](https://www.fvtoc.com.au/s/Fire-strategy-final.pdf), [*Victorian Traditional Owner Native Food and Botanicals Strategy*](https://www.fvtoc.com.au/native-foods-and-botanicals); and a further commitment to progressing, and enabling the implementation of the *Victorian Aboriginal Local Government Strategy*.

Victoria’s Traditional Owner Corporations are increasingly recognised for the role they play in regional economies and communities. **It is hoped that the support provided to regional Victoria in the 2022/23 State Budget, particularly in preparation for the 2026 Commonwealth Games, will also benefit Victorian Traditional Owners with a focus on real progress in the future growth and protection of the economy and environment.**

**ENDS**

**Quote from Paul Paton, CEO**

*“The 2022/23 State Budget will deliver initiatives that benefit Victorian Traditional Owners and we look to subsequent budgets to realise genuine support for the activation of our rights and the exercising of our authority through self-determination, particularly in implementing the strategies developed by Traditional Owners in partnership with government.”*

**About the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations**

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations is the Victorian state-wide body that convenes and advocates for the rights of Traditional Owners while progressing wider social, economic, environmental and cultural objectives. We support the progress of agreement-making and participation in decision-making to enhance the authority of Traditional Owner Corporations on behalf of their communities.

The Federation was established in 2013 by Traditional Owner Corporations who recognised that through a path of working together Traditional Owner Groups could be stronger and could advance their shared interests in policy engagement, and in creating economic opportunities and caring for Country.

**Links**

[Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations](https://www.fvtoc.com.au/)

[Traditional Owner Game Management Strategy](https://www.fvtoc.com.au/game-management)

[Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscape Strategy](https://www.fvtoc.com.au/cultural-landscapes)

[Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy](https://www.fvtoc.com.au/s/Fire-strategy-final.pdf)

[Victorian Traditional Owner Native Foods and Botanicals Strategy](https://www.fvtoc.com.au/native-foods-and-botanicals)