



Media Statement

Thursday 20 April 2023

Victorian Traditional Owners discuss the Voice

Today the Federation and CEOs of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations were pleased to meet with Minister Linda Burney to discuss the Voice.

As a federation, we reflect the voices of Traditional Owners across the land now known as Victoria. Today, the Minister heard that our people need time to consult and discuss the referendum question, but that the principle of a voice is supported.

Increasingly, we are being asked by the broader community which way we will vote at the referendum. As member corporations, it is important that we inform but not influence our own Aboriginal communities. At the same time, we must also support everyone to understand the importance of our recognition in the constitution.

So, we are pleased that that the referendum will include a neutral civics information campaign providing unbiased information about the referendum and its process. Each corporation is different but as a federation, we seek for our voices to not just be heard but responded to.

"Let's use this opportunity to continue to support the principle that our people are best placed to inform policies that affect them. We've done it through the process of Voice, Treaty, Truth in Victoria and we will continue to support our voices being heard at all levels of society and government."

Paul Paton, CEO of the Federation

Our people have endured government making decisions on our behalf, with sometimes horrifying outcomes. Whilst this referendum is a once in a lifetime opportunity to ensure such policies are informed by our own knowledge and experiences, we are also burdened by the distrust that this history has engendered.

Trust is developed through transparency, accountability and respect, all central to what we hope to see realised through Voice, Treaty and Truth.

Let's talk, work together and ensure that our resolve to be heard is greater than our doubts. Now is the time to support a principle and trust that our design of the voice's eventual makeup will speak for us all.

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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.

About Paul Paton

Paul is a Gonnai and Monaro man with a long involvement in reconnecting individuals and communities with language, culture and identity. He has held several executive roles and directorships including as the Executive Officer at the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages and as a Director on the Board of First Nations Legal & Research Services.

Paul is committed to building on the Federation's success as a key organisation that strengthens the voice of Traditional Owners in Victoria. He brings his knowledge, skills and networks to work closely with Traditional Owners across the State to support their aspirations for community and Country whilst taking up the challenge for self-determination and Treaty.

Media Contact

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