

FEDERATION OF VICTORIAN TRADITIONAL
OWNER CORPORATIONS

10
YEARS
STRONG
2013-2023



Federation of
Victorian Traditional
Owner Corporations

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land we work on as the First Peoples of this Country.

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CreativeCubes.Co
333 Drummond Street, Carlton VIC 3053
info@fvtoc.com.au
www.fvtoc.com.au

Warning:
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers should be aware that this document may contain images or names of People who have since passed away.

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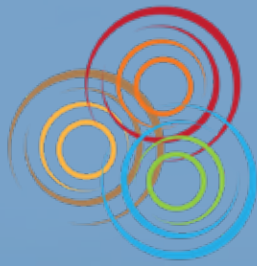
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**Federation of
Victorian Traditional
Owner Corporations**

**10 YEARS STRONG
2013-2023**





ABOUT US

Our **VISION** is of Traditional Owners strong on Country and leading the social, political, economic and cultural landscape.

Our **PURPOSE** is to facilitate and amplify Traditional Owner voices to self-determine their futures and to build on and strengthen collective interests and opportunities.

Our **OBJECTIVE** is to embed recognition, empower self-determination and enable capacity through facilitating, convening, communicating, advocating and amplifying the Traditional Owner voice.



We are guided by our FOUR VALUES

- | | |
|----------------------|---|
| COMMUNITY | Working to achieve better outcomes for Victorian Traditional Owner communities. |
| CULTURE | Engaging with respect for Traditional Owners' cultural values, knowledge and practices. |
| COUNTRY | Recognising all Victorian Traditional Owners and respecting their primacy over Country, we come together to keep Country strong. |
| COLLABORATION | Participation in economic opportunities and decision-making processes, whilst sharing knowledge and experience based on trust and mutual respect. |



Our work is undertaken through FOUR PILLARS

- ADVOCACY** Advocating for rights, interests and objectives of Traditional Owner Corporations.
- NATION BUILDING** Supporting the sustainable development, capability and capacity of Traditional Owner Corporations to achieve their objectives.
- KNOWLEDGE SHARING** Supporting knowledge, systems and practice development through the promotion of resources, events, and information sharing opportunities.
- ACCOUNTABILITY** Ensuring that government is accountable for enabling the principles of Aboriginal self-determination.

Donald Hobern, 2017,
Hattah-Kulkyne National Park,
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CHAIRPERSON MESSAGE

Cassandra Lewis

For a decade, the Federation has progressed the ambitions of Traditional Owners across Victoria, through engagement and advocacy.

The strength and generosity of our member Traditional Owner corporations underpins our work and is rewarded by our achievements. It is their collective visions for self-determination of Country and Culture, that sets the agenda for the Federation to find government pathways to realise these visions. Without members setting this direction and strengthening the Federation's collective voice, the work would fall to individual corporations or not be undertaken at all.

To be a Federation is to have allies, to come together. The very word comes from *foederar* (to ally) and *foedus* (league). Membership of the Federation is an essential way to raise our voices over shared concerns and celebrate our communities and achievements.

The work the Federation does to progress the ambitions of Traditional Owners across Victoria, through engagement and advocacy, provides a state-wide perspective.

Playing an active role in national policy development and assertion of a Victorian Traditional Owner perspective, discussing their concerns in broader considerations of First Nations rights and ambitions, policy and regulatory change, is an increasing focus for the Federation.

Geoffrey Moore, 2023, an owl is sitting in a tree looking at the camera, Unsplash



CEO MESSAGE

Paul Paton

Looking back over ten years of consistent, visionary work, it is clear that we have contributed to changing the regulatory and statutory landscape in which Victorian Traditional Owner corporations do their important work.

It is also clear that in advocating change on that level, change is also made to the everyday lives of Aboriginal peoples everywhere.

We have put cultural fire and cultural water on the agenda for government, sought greater protections for Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, fought for a fair place in the expanding Native Foods and Botanicals industry, supported a drastic reconsideration of how our cultural heritage is approached at both state and national levels and worked to have economic development considered as more than just small business grants.

If we are serious about closing the gap, we must also be serious about nation building and Traditional Owners having real decision making on Country and in their communities. Now is not the time to pause but continue to critically examine the regulatory and statutory barriers to connection to, caring for and thriving on Country.

Let's make sure that for the next ten years, Federation continues to be at the forefront of Aboriginal led advocacy and policy, putting Traditional Owners and their representative and inclusive corporations at the decision-making table.





10 STRONG YEARS

On June 27, the **Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations** is registered with the Australian Securities & Investments Commission



2013

The establishing members are

- Barengi Gadjin Land Council, Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation, and
- Native Title Services Victoria (NTSV).

Later that year, the

- Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation, Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation and
- Wurundjeri Tribe and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council become members.

Federation Enterprises is established as Federation Heritage Services

2014

- Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation become members
- Barpa Pty. Ltd. is Federation Enterprises' first joint venture
- Aboriginal Water Policy Framework, the first significant state-wide

2016

- First People of the Millewa-Mallee become members
- On Country Heritage and Consulting is established as a Federation Enterprises joint venture

2017

- The Bunurong Land Council become members.
- Native Title Legal & Research Services
- Koori HR is established as a Federation Enterprises joint venture

2018

- Appointment of the inaugural CEO, Marcus Stewart
- We become a foundation member of the Victorian Aboriginal Executive Council
- We establish and provide secretariat support to the Natural Resource Management Collaborative Body





2019

- We host the Traditional Owner Strategic Alignment Forum
- United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues attendance
- Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy is launched
- We co-host the National Native Title Conference
- We establish a Forum for the CEOs of Victoria's Traditional Owner Corporations
- We partner with Djakitjuk Djanga program
- We hold 29 facilitated meetings for Treaty process

2020

- First Principles Review launches
- Become foundation member of the Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy Steering Committee
- Victorian Aboriginal Economic and Employment Council
- Develop the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy

2021

- We release of the Traditional Owner Native Foods and Botanicals Strategy
- We launched the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy
- The Federation developed Traditional Game Management Strategy is launched
- Roadmap for Aboriginal Access to Water for Economic Development and the Cultural Water for Cultural Economies report released
- Our six Treaty Discussion Papers are released

2022

- We host Yarning Circles
- Yuma Yirramboi (Invest in Tomorrow in the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung language) is released
- The Victorian Aboriginal Local Government Strategy is released





2013-2023

2013

2013

On June 27, the **Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations** is registered with the Australian Securities & Investments Commission. The establishing members are the **Barengi Gadjin Land Council**, **Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation** and **Native Title Services Victoria (NTSV)**.

The Federation's objectives are:

- The promotion of economic development and self-determination of Traditional Owner Corporations in Victoria.
- Assisting Traditional Owner Corporations to manage their land and promote environmental and cultural protection of their country.
- The promotion of the interests of the company, its members and Aboriginal people more generally, to Government and other bodies to make representations or submissions on relevant matters of law, legislative measure or policies.
- Support and promote mutually beneficial collaboration and partnership arrangements between Traditional Owner Corporations owned social and commercial business enterprises in Victoria.
- Relief of poverty, sickness, suffering, distress, misfortune, destitution and helplessness amongst Traditional Owners in Victoria.

Later that year, the **Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation**, **Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation** and **Wurundjeri Tribe and Compensation Cultural Heritage Council** become members.

On August 2, the Federation is registered as both a public company limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act 2001 (Cth) and as a charity (Public Benevolent Institution) with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission.

Federation Enterprises is established as Federation Heritage Services. A for-profit, wholly owned subsidiary of the Federation, the role and function of Federation Enterprises is to establish joint venture companies with at least 51% ownership, particularly with a view to leveraging government procurement opportunities.

2014

2014

Taungurung Clans Aboriginal Corporation become members.

Barpa Pty. Ltd. is Federation Enterprises' first joint venture, partnering with the award-winning multi-national construction company Icon. The partnership builds on the strengths of the two entities to offer an Indigenous solution for capital works projects across Australia.



2015

2015

Procurement Conference at the University of Melbourne to discuss how Traditional Owners can advance economic development through procurement.

2016

2016

First People of the Millewa-Mallee become members.

On Country Heritage and Consulting is established as a Federation Enterprises joint venture, partnering with Terra Rosa Consulting to provide services relating to cultural heritage management, natural resource management, Aboriginal engagement, capacity development, training, and mediation.

2017

2017

The **Bunurong Land Council** become members.

A group restructure is undertaken, and Federation becomes the sole member of NTSV now First Nations Legal & Research Services (**First Nations**), making NTSV a wholly owned subsidiary of the Federation.

Koori HR is established as a Federation Enterprises joint venture, partnering with HR Links of the Rusca Group to provide recruitment and labour hire services in the civil, mining, oil & gas and construction sectors.

2018

2018

Following the restructure to grow the organisation and build capacity for our advocacy and advisory services, we now operate with our own structure and resources. Key to the new operational structures is the **appointment of the inaugural CEO**, Marcus Stewart.

We become a foundation member of the **Victorian Aboriginal Executive Council**, established to provide a self-determining collaboration, policy development and advocacy mechanism for Victoria's peak, lead and state-wide Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations.

Contributing to our policy work, we establish and provide secretariat support to the **Natural Resource Management Collaborative Body**, so that Traditional Owners and senior government representatives can coordinate and develop natural resource management policy.

2019

2019

We host the **Traditional Owner Strategic Alignment Forum** so that Traditional Owners, their corporations and government ministers can participate in open dialogue on strategic priorities including for legislative reform, self-determination, Treaty, as well as partnership, engagement and accountability with the State.

Our Chair, Jason Mifsud, and CEO, Marcus Stewart, attend the **United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues** to learn from and strengthen our ties with our international counterparts in implementing Treaty.

After significant consultation and policy development, the Federation developed **Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy** is launched by Minister D'Ambrosio. Over 50 fire knowledge holders from across Victoria contributed to the development of the Strategy, which provides a set of principles and strategic priorities along with a policy and practice framework for effective Traditional Owner-led cultural fire management in Victoria.

Continuing to participate in national policy development, we co-host the **National Native Title Conference** with the National Native Title Council.

Focusing on our commitment to knowledge sharing, we establish a **Forum for the CEOs of Victoria's Traditional Owner Corporations** to share information and experience across a range of policy and practical matters affecting the corporations and their communities.

Focusing on economic development for Traditional Owners, we partner with Agriculture Victoria to support Aboriginal-owned businesses and organisations to develop a thriving local native foods and botanicals industry through the **Djakitjuk Djanga** program.

To advance the **Treaty process**, we hold 29 facilitated meetings tailored to the needs and circumstances of groups in both formally recognised or not yet formally recognised areas.

In response to our advocacy, the Victorian government announced a \$13.6 million **Traditional Owner Nation-building Package**, extending the program with a further \$11.12 million in 2021 to enable a wide range of nation-building activities and expand important services and resources for Traditional Owner groups.



2020

2020

After strong advocacy, the Victorian Attorney-General launches the **First Principles Review** to comprehensively examine the content of agreements under the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010. We conduct a comprehensive review of the Settlement Act and all associated policy and legislation.

We become a foundation member of the **Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy Steering Committee**, ensuring that the Strategy aligns with the Victorian Aboriginal Affairs Framework 2018-2023, the Victorian Treaty process, the Victorian Closing the Gap Implementation Plan and the work of the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

Continuing our economic development work in the establishment of a culturally authentic native foods and botanicals industry through the **Djakitjuk Djanga** program, thirteen successful projects are announced.

Federation CEO, Paul Paton, joins the **Victorian Aboriginal Economic and Employment Council** and the Koori Caucus, supporting our advocacy for an Indigenous Preferential Procurement Policy.

Throughout 2020, we undertake extensive consultation to develop the **Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy**. Facilitated by the Federation, but led by Victorian Traditional Owners, Elders and Knowledge Holders and Traditional Owner Corporation Staff, the Strategy development was overseen by a Traditional Owner Technical Working group and a Co-Governance Group.

A core component of the Traditional Owner Nation-building Package is the **Nation-building Resource Pool**. Administered by the Federation, the Resource Pool provides \$5.835 million in flexible funding for nation-building projects that can be delivered by June 2024.

2021

2021

Continuing our strong work in policy development, we facilitate the development and release of the **Traditional Owner Native Foods and Botanicals Strategy**, contributing to cultural strengthening and sustainability of First Nations in Victoria by recognising rights and interests regarding biocultural species and their associated knowledge and practices.

Victorian Traditional Owners launched the **Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy**, redefining the connection to Country for the world's oldest living culture. Facilitated by the Federation and developed in partnership with the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP) and Parks Victoria, the Strategy is the first of its kind in Australia and sets out a framework to systematically enable Victorian Traditional Owners to lead planning and activate cultural knowledge and practices to manage Country.

In close collaboration with Traditional Owners across Victoria and a Project Steering Group including Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR), the Game Management Authority, Parks Victoria and DELWP, the Federation developed **Traditional Game Management Strategy** is launched.

We establish a tri-party to oversee and support Traditional Owners' input to the development of a **Roadmap for Aboriginal Access to Water for Economic Development**. As part of this project, 20 Traditional Owners and First Nations representatives were resourced to attend over 40 workshops and meetings from December 2018 to March 2021. The resultant **Cultural Water for Cultural Economies** report was released in March.

Continuing our policy and knowledge sharing work, our six **Treaty Discussion Papers** are released. Providing a foundational resource for the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and Traditional Owners, the papers are informed by insights and questions posed during Traditional Owner treaty engagement meetings held in 2019-2020.

Federation CEO Paul Paton joins the **Victorian Aboriginal Economic and Employment Council** and the Koori Caucus, contributing significantly to the development of the new Victorian Aboriginal Economic and Employment Strategy, *Yuma Yirramboi* (Invest in Tomorrow in the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung language).

2022

We host **Yarning Circles** with Traditional Owner Corporation, supported by DJPR. Their focus is sharing knowledge and analysis of several emerging and rapidly developing sectors with potential for economic development.

The new Victorian Aboriginal Economic and Employment Strategy, **Yuma Yirramboi** (Invest in Tomorrow in the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung language) is released. We have contributed significantly to its development through our participation on the Victorian Aboriginal Economic and Employment Council Koori Caucus, helping ensure and shape the focus on Traditional Owner groups interests.

On 1 July we de-couple from First Nations by withdrawing as their sole member. This restructure is undertaken because we feel that de-coupling would better meet community expectations for accountability and respond to a perceived need for there to be a clearer distinction between the roles of each organisation.

The **Victorian Aboriginal Local Government Strategy** is released. We have provided critical advice to the development of the Strategy through participation on the Aboriginal Steering Committee, testing the strategy through key forums and signalling the need for a stronger focus on Traditional Owners and their representative structures and advocating for resourcing to support its implementation.

2022



CONTRIBUTORS

Jeremy Clark

I was one of the inaugural directors of the Federation 10 years ago when it was first formed.

Looking back to then, the Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation had just formed and received a native title determination. We were invited, along with a number of other Corporations, to sit and yarn with some other groups who were in a similar situation to us.

Gradually more and more Corporations attended these informal chats, until we decided to formalise them into a body. That body ended up being the Federation.

Having a say in government policy and programs is very impactful for our people. The Federation has been our voice.

I think the Barpa experience for the Federation has been a highly successful one. We said, 'well, we're a Federation, we've got an organisation, but we've got no

resources, we've got no income to become a powerful advocacy body'. So, the idea of having a business that could bring in an income as well as achieve other goals such as economic empowerment, employment opportunities and business opportunities for our people, was very attractive.

Within a couple of years Barpa had won, was employing people and was able to deliver profits back to the Federation. Those profits were used by the Federation to employ its first CEO and enabled the Federation to really build its capacity.

Economically empowering our people is very satisfying. The money that goes back to the Federation allows them to continue to advocate on behalf of Traditional Owners without government strings attached which is amazing – cut the cord of government, let's empower ourselves.

So, a commercial business delivering much social good, Barpa proves you can achieve great things while making a profit.

Mick Harding

The Federation didn't just fall out of the sky. It was about strategic thinking much before it even became a thing.

There was a notion that native title couldn't exist down here because we've been so heavily impacted by invasion or colonisation. And so slowly groups were getting determinations and were getting together once a quarter, trying to come together as a collective to have a better voice. So, we created the strategy and the groundwork to create the Federation.

As the years went by, I was really happy to be a part of the Federation board because I could see there were great possibilities. It was really about being the representative for Community.

It's good to listen to what other people are doing. Sometimes you hear about how one group is tackling a particular issue and think "we never thought of it like that" or "we never thought you could do that".

The Federation should always be about the health and wellbeing of Country and our people. Sometimes I wonder whether all these things we're trying to achieve do that, or are we servicing the government's needs rather than our own? It's good to ask that question from time to time and ask ourselves in an honest way.

The Hon. Gabrielle Williams

Victorian Traditional Owners have a long and proud history of advocating for Country and community. The Federation is a part of this story and for ten years has played a significant role in representing the aspirations of Traditional Owners, advocating for Traditional Owner rights and promoting self-determination in managing Country.

Since 2013 the Federation has led, and partnered, in key initiatives including the Traditional Owner Nation-building Package, the Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscapes Strategy and Federation Enterprises.

These reforms have supported Traditional Owners to engage in nation-building and prepare for future treaty negotiations, enhanced Traditional Owner self-determination in the management of their land and waters and enabled Traditional Owner Corporations to access important resources.

The Federation played an invaluable role in supporting early Treaty discussions in Victoria, releasing a series of papers in response to Traditional Owner engagement that sought to stimulate ideas about treaty making. This input continues to progress outcomes for Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Victorians as we move towards Treaty negotiations.

The Federation has been a leader in facilitating and amplifying the voices of Victorian Traditional Owners. I commend the Federation's strong advocacy for Traditional Owner rights, and its long-term work to achieve better outcomes with and for Traditional Owners.

D Cook, Brolga Hird Swamp, CC By 2.0



MEMBERS

The Federation's members are Traditional Owner Corporations which may each appoint two directors. The members, through the Federation's board of directors, provide the overarching direction for our work, from setting our corporate budgets and priorities, accountability requirements and principles, to key policy positions and statutory changes required to move forward in real self-determination for Traditional Owners.

Membership of the Federation enables and amplifies our voices over shared concerns and in celebration of our communities and achievements.

Coming together to share resources, call for change and set policy direction strengthens our commitment.

Working together begins to roll back some of the imposition of colonisation as we share our Nation ambitions.

Standing together makes our voices louder and our position stronger.

Our current members manage statutory responsibility for half of those areas of the state with a formally recognised Traditional Owner group.



Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation

We are a Traditional Owner organisation that represent the Bunurong people of the South-Eastern Kulin Nation. We aim to preserve and protect the sacred lands and waterways of our ancestors, their places, traditional cultural practices, and stories.



First People of the Millewa- Mallee

The First People of the Millewa-Mallee Aboriginal Corporation represents the Ngintait and Latji Latji Traditional Owners of the Millewa-Mallee lands in the far north-west of Victoria. As a Traditional Owner Corporation, we seek to represent the interests and well-being of our members and community.



DJAARA

The Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation (DJAARA) is a representative body for Dja Dja Wurrung People. Our vision is of a thriving and sustainable corporation with established interests across the Clan's traditional areas that are cultural, environmental, and economically beneficial for Traditional Owners and the wider community.



Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation

The Gunaikurnai people are recognised by the Federal Court and the State of Victoria as the Traditional Owners of a large area of Gippsland spanning from Warragul in the west to the Snowy River in the east, and from the Great Divide in the north to the coast in the south.



Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation

The Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation manages native title rights for the Eastern Maar Peoples. Our land extends as far north as Ararat and encompasses the Warrnambool, Port Fairy and Great Ocean Road areas.



Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation

The Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation holds statutory responsibilities for the protection and management of Aboriginal cultural heritage places and objects for our People.

BOARD MEMBERS

Joe Anka	2014-2015	Adam Magennis	2017-2018
Sherryn Antonopoulous	2019-2020	Tim McCartney	2019-2020
Graham Atkinson	2013-2018	David Merry	2016-2018
Wendy Berick	2014-2018	Daniel Miller	2023-current
Beryl Booth	2015-2018	Jason Mifsud	2018-2020
Matthew Burns	2018-2022	Lawrence Moser	2015-2016
Corlene Button	2013-2014	Ricky Mullett	2015-2018
Fay Carter	2013-2014	Trent Nelson	2018-2021
Rodney Carter	2018-current	Robert Ogden	2018-2022
Nicole Cassar	2021-2022	Darren Perry	2016-2018 / 2019-2020
Jeremy Clark	2013-2016	Glendle Schrader	2019-2022
Thomas Clarke	2013-2018	Marcus Stewart	2015-2017
Dylan Clarke	2017-2020	Michael Stewart	2014-2016
Marcus Clarke	2020-current	Matthew Storey	2013-2017
Shane Clarke	2022-current	Austin Sweeney	2013-2018
Janine Coombs	2013-2019	Patricia Terry	2014-2015
Robert Critch	2013-2015	Dan Turnbull	2018-2022
Grant Hansen	2020-2021	Larry Walsh	2014-2015
Michael Harding	2013-2014 / 2018-2019	Perry Wandin	2013-2017 / 2020-current
Ron Jones	2013-2017	Lois When	2023-current
Tony Kelly	2018	Norman Wilson	2018-2019 / 2020-current
Barry Kenny	2013-2015	Janine Wilson	2018-2019
Robby Knight	2019		
Cassandra Lewis	2021-current		
Jamie Lowe	2016-2020		

CURRENT



Rodney Carter
2018-current



Marcus Clarke
2020-current



Shane Clarke
2022-current



Cassandra Lewis
2021-current



Dan Miller
2023-current



Perry Wandin
2013-2017 /2020-current



Lois Whelan
2023-current



Uncle Norm Tinawin Wilson
2018-2019 /2020-current

