

# Budget Submission. Don't stop now.



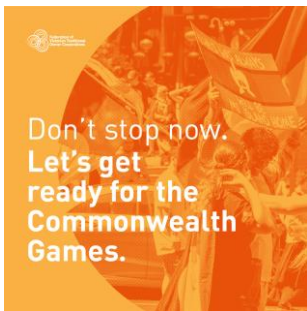
Victoria is at the forefront of Treaty and Truth-telling in Australia, removing many barriers to First Peoples realising true self-determination, but it's time for First Peoples to have their cultures genuinely respected.

The Victorian Government must continue their leading work and continue to progress strategic priorities developed and implemented with Traditional Owners. Now is not the time to pause on implementing strategies towards self-determination.

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations has listened to Traditional Owners and identified eight initiatives that, if addressed now, could significantly and positively impact the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

**Whether it's to the Commonwealth Games, Climate Change or Government Responsibility,  
We call on the government to affect real change in 2023.  
Don't Stop Now because it can't wait.**

## ... 2026 Commonwealth Games



The 2026 Commonwealth Games will be the first ever predominantly regional Commonwealth Games, taking place across multiple cities and regional hubs. It is essential that cultural provision at the Games is made by representative and inclusive Traditional Owner groups and that their Indigenous Cultural Intellectual Property is protected.

The Traditional Owner Corporations across Victoria are large regional employers and providers of Cultural tourism, providing a key point of difference for Victoria. They require support to scale business capacity or develop new ventures to leverage long term economic development opportunities from the Games. Doing so will secure a legacy for Victoria by showcasing the unique landscape of regional Victoria.

Support for scaling and investment attraction will help realise the full benefits of the Games in 2026 and beyond and contribute to the on-going cultural and natural landscape content of the visitor experience. To realise the provision of appropriate cultural content and Games preparedness requires **\$5m over 3 years** to support member and partner engagement and business development in each Corporation and to support coordination with industry and marketing across the State.



For over 60,000 years, Traditional Owners have held medicinal, dietary and harvesting knowledge about plants on Country. Today's native foods and botanicals industry is profiting from this knowledge and the practices of caring for Country.

The Australian legal system does not currently protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) from exploitation by others, including where it relates to the use and management of native plants. Native foods and botanicals will feature prominently in the 2026 Commonwealth Games cultural experience, so it is essential that Traditional Owner rights are recognised and their knowledge protected. The *Victorian Traditional Owner Native Food and Botanicals Strategy* provides guidance to laying the foundations for a strong Traditional Owner led industry.

Supporting the Traditional Owner and business sector through awareness raising, protocols implementation and business development requires **\$2m over 3 years** to help guide and market this emerging, unique and authentic industry, and to contribute to the visitor experience.

# Don't stop now.



## ... Climate Change



Responding to meet climate change commitments, the renewable energy sector is rapidly expanding. Traditional Owners, with significant interests over much of the State, are not adequately resourced to build the knowledge base and acquire planning, technical, legal and financial advice to be active members in this sector.

Developing meaningful partnerships in the sector is hampered and reduced to recommended engagement on benefit sharing agreements. A *Traditional Owner Renewable Energy Preparedness Roadmap* must be developed to define pathways for Traditional Owners to invest and participate appropriately in the expansion of the renewable energy sector, and to increase the social benefits from government's investment.

Corporations have a stake in climate change mitigation and adaptation and should be supported to build their internal capacities and knowledge bases, requiring **\$5m over 3 years** to support a Climate Change Preparedness position and member engagement in each Traditional Owner Corporation; supporting the Federation to develop and implement the Roadmap requires **\$2m over 3 years**, including strengthening the ability to host a carbon neutral Commonwealth Games.



Cultural fire has been an essential way for Traditional Owners to care for Country for tens of thousands of years. Today however, existing legislative, regulatory and resourcing arrangements continue to be barriers to the reintroduction of cultural fire to Country.

Enabling Traditional Owners to apply cultural fire to Country will ensure culturally important animals and plants, as well as cultural knowledge and practice, can continue to exist for future generations. Used appropriately, fire is a central tool in climate change adaptation and mitigation practices.

Implementation of the *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Fire Strategy* will provide a sustained and strategic approach to resourcing and enabling Traditional Owner led governance, management and application of Cultural Fire to Country. Implementation of the already agreed Strategy requires **\$100m** to support Corporations' engagement and leadership.



The existing systems, structures and practices of land management in Victoria do not enable Traditional Owners' worldview, ontology, history, institutions, practices and networks of relationships to be applied in the management of Country.

The *Victorian Traditional Owner Cultural Landscape Strategy* creates the framework in which Traditional Owners can play the lead role in the governance, planning and management of their Country and in the application of their knowledge and practice in land and water management. This is a critical element in giving effect to self-determination. The application, planning and shaping of these practices is a respectful way of drawing on Traditional Owners' deep knowledge of Country for our long-term benefit in ameliorating the ongoing and ever-changing effects of climate change.

Realising Traditional Owner led climate responsiveness can only be enacted through an embedded cultural landscape approach, requiring **\$9m over 3 years** to support a position and data capture and development in each Corporation and **\$1.5m over 3 years** in supporting the Federation's research, coordination and contribution to the necessary regulatory and policy implementation of the Strategy.



# Don't stop now.



## ... Climate Change



Successive government policies have forced the dispossession of lands and waters causing significant trauma for Traditional Owners. Victorian Traditional Owners currently hold less than 0.0006 per cent of secure Water Share Entitlements in the State, and less than 0.005 percent of less secure and flexible Take and Use Licenses. Providing significant long-term funding for purchase of water entitlements will ensure this is changed.

It's time for the Victorian Government to partner with Traditional Owners as rights holders, with decision making authority equal to the state in water management, empowering them to effect climate adaptation through cultural application on Country. In the short term, Corporations require **\$5m over 3 years** to support a staff position for their engagement with the process and a further **\$18m over 3 years** for projects and capacity, technical advice and practical implementation to begin the process of activating *Water is Life: Traditional Owner Access to Water Roadmap*.

## ... Government Responsibility



The Victorian Government and local councils are responsible for many of the systems and structures that govern First Peoples' lives. Currently, Aboriginal people are underrepresented in positions of authority to enable their communities' interests and recognition. Self-determination in this regulatory and community environment requires systemic and generational reform. All levels of government must make significant cultural shifts in their thinking about how they value, respect, and invest in Aboriginal knowledge, systems, and expertise.

Supporting Traditional Owners to engage with local government processes is required in order to inform decisions affecting their communities. The Local Government Act 2020 and the *Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy* set a pathway forward. However, it is vital that implementation of the legislation and strategy is encouraged and supported in order to give effect to Traditional Owners relationships and to drive local procurement and growth opportunities.

Supporting engagement requires **\$10m over 4 years** for Corporations to fulfil the legislative intention and practically engage with local government processes and strategies through funded positions and community governance systems within each Corporation; and **\$2m over 4 years** for strengthened coordination and development of best practice guidance enabling systemic reform.



The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations provides a single point of advice and information for both government and the general public. Our work furthers self-determination by:

- Providing informed and insightful expert advice through our experience, knowledge and understanding of the Traditional Owner context, organisations, infrastructure and people.
- Bridging and building on-the-ground support and information with advice and advocacy for long term and systemic change to regulatory, policy and institutional arrangements.
- Bringing together Victorian Traditional Owners to share their knowledge and views, and to connect and link with partners and opportunities.

Maintaining our operational capacity and giving effect to our unique service provision will continue to help drive real self-determination in government policy, program and statutory environments. **\$4m over 4 years** provides a true efficiency gain by linking and coordinating across government, business and the wider community to enable and embed Traditional Owners' self-determination in driving wellbeing of Culture, Country and Community.

# Don't stop now.



## We are the Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations,

providing a state-wide perspective and progressing the ambitions of Traditional Owners across Victoria through engagement, advocacy and advice. The Federation's member Traditional Owner Corporations share their collective visions for self-determination of Country and Culture, and the Federation undertakes the work to find government pathways to realise them.

As a Victoria-wide collective, the Federation is well placed to support healthy Country and strengthen healthy Communities. We engage an holistic approach to partner with government and give effect to self-determination to achieve these objectives.

Our capability in supporting co-governance arrangements and providing sound insight is based on our deep knowledge and relationships. This unique position has been critical to the development of key Traditional Owner led government strategies, ensuring there is a sound and pragmatic basis supporting the work of government and Traditional Owners.

This call for support for Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations and the Federation of Victorian Owner Corporations will positively and profoundly impact the wellbeing of Culture, Country and Community.

*To do so requires that we Don't Stop Now.*

### ... 2026 Commonwealth Games

**\$ 7m**

*Supporting Corporations to benefit from and strengthen Victoria's investment showcasing the unique cultural landscapes and visitor experience for the Games both in 2026 and beyond.*

### ... Climate Change

**\$ 140.5m**

*Supporting Corporations in climate change mitigation and adaptation and continuing implementation of the Cultural Fire Strategy, Water Is Life Roadmap and Cultural Landscapes.*

### ... Government Responsibility

**\$ 16m**

*Supporting government to make significant cultural shifts in the way it values, respects, and invests in Aboriginal knowledge, systems, and expertise and enhancing coordinated and efficient implementation of partnerships and strategies.*