

Media Statement

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Victorian Government ministers must follow Yoorrook Justice Commission testimony with action

The Victorian Government ministers who vowed to address legacies of injustice towards Aboriginal people in their evidence to Victoria's truth-telling commission must now back up their words with action, says the state-wide body that advocates for the rights and interests of Victorian Traditional Owner groups.

Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations' CEO Paul Paton welcomed the forthright and, at times, emotional statements from the five Victorian Government ministers who testified at Yoorrook Justice Commission's land, sky and waters hearing over the past month – but warns acknowledgement of harm without recompense means little, and risks eroding Traditional Owners' goodwill ahead of Treaty negotiations.

"It's heartening to hear the Victorian Government take seriously the historic and continuing harm that land dispossession has caused to Traditional Owners," he says.

"In particular I acknowledge the Minister for Environment admitting that community benefit schemes were deliberately designed to exclude Aboriginal people from the economic benefits of activities on their Country, the Premier's recognition that Aboriginal people are now locked out of owning or caring for prime land in inner Melbourne, and both the Minister for Water and the Minister for Energy and Resources telling Yoorrook that Traditional Owners have received almost nothing of billions in revenue taken from the commodification of resources in and on their Country."

"But we don't need government to tell us more must be done – we've been saying that for over 200 years. What we need is real action to address these wrongs and ensure the ongoing disadvantage and harm caused by colonisation can end."

The Federation's Victorian Pre-Budget submission recommended key priorities for Victorian Government investment that would progress Traditional Owners' self-determination: reducing risk to heritage on Country, recognising and resourcing Traditional Owners as emerging regional authorities, and embedding Traditional Owners' rights and interests in new economic industries.

"To the Victorian Government we say: don't stop now," says Mr Paton.

"To progress Traditional Owners' self-determination, we must act fast to prevent goodwill receding. Giving effect to these policies and adequately resourcing Traditional Owner groups will prevent greater cost in the future and help demonstrate you're ready to back your Yoorrook words with action.

"I welcome the Premier's words – 'if we want to get better outcomes, we need to do things differently'. The time for change is now."

– ENDS –

About the Federation

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations is the Victorian state-wide body that convenes and advocates for the rights of Traditional Owner groups while progressing wider social, economic, environmental and cultural objectives. It was established in 2013 by Traditional Owner Corporations who recognised they could be stronger together and advance their shared interests in policy engagement, economic opportunity and caring for Country. [Read the Federation's submission to Yoorrook's land injustice inquiry.](#)

Media enquiries – Sophie Raynor, 0434 578 933 or sophie.raynor@fvto.com.au