



Federation of
Victorian Traditional
Owner Corporations

Media Statement

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Governments must restore and respect Traditional Owners' authority for Budget pledges to be meaningful

If governments want to close the gap in First Nations life outcomes and see their Budget commitments to Aboriginal communities be truly effective, they must fundamentally reconceive of the way they work with Traditional Owners: respecting and resourcing their self-determined governance structures, says the state-wide body that advocates for the rights and interests of Victorian Traditional Owner groups.

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations welcomes the recent Victorian and Federal Budgets' funding commitments to Aboriginal communities, but CEO Paul Paton says a genuine commitment to improving outcomes for First Nations peoples involves resourcing Traditional Owner Corporations.

"Building a better future requires governments to restore our stolen capacity to lead and make decisions for Country. Fundamentally, this involves governments recognising Traditional Owners as rights-holders on Country – not mere stakeholders to consult or a box to tick, but authorities to adequately resource and work alongside in genuine partnership. Only then can our collective right to self-determination be realised."

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples enshrines the collective right of First Nations people to self-determination and self-government in exercising this right which, in Victoria, is expressed principally through Traditional Owner Corporation structures.

Mr Paton says that Traditional Owner Corporations must be adequately and promptly resourced in order to deliver pledged Aboriginal initiatives and fulfil the commitments to self-determination and shared decision-making made by the Federal Government in its National Agreement on Closing the Gap and Victorian Government ministers in recent testimony to the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

"Governments talk about the importance of self-determination, yet they won't adequately resource Traditional Owner Corporations to make self-determined decisions for our communities and engage with government in genuine partnership," says Mr Paton.

"For generations First People have been let down by successive governments. Now is the time to do things differently. We need smarter state and national investment to restore Traditional Owners to our rightful place as decision-makers on Country. I say to governments: don't stop now. Recognise, respect and *resource* Traditional Owners as rights-holders on Country."

– 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 Victorian Budget submission.](#)

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