



Federation of
Victorian Traditional
Owner Corporations

Media Statement

14 May 2024

Historic Bakaru Wayaparrangu agreement will redress past injustice and enable Traditional Owners' prosperity

An historic compensation and benefit-sharing agreement between a Traditional Owner Corporation and mining company unlocks an unprecedented opportunity for Traditional Owners to be respected as rights-holders and equal partners on Country, says the state-wide body that advocates for the rights and interests of Victorian Traditional Owner groups.

Signed by DJAARA and gold-mining company Agnico Eagle on Monday, the Bakaru Wayaparrangu deal is the first contemporary, voluntary agreement of its kind and will see wealth and prosperity from mining activities on Country applied to ensure Traditional Owner Corporation members' economic independence and prosperity.

Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations CEO Paul Paton welcomed the agreement as an activation of Traditional Owners' rights to care for and make decisions regarding Country.

"Since colonisation, mining has happened on Country without our consent or benefit," he says.

"This historic agreement represents unprecedented opportunities for nation-building, economic development, and caring for Country – which have been systemically denied by government since colonisation."

Yoorrook Justice Commission heard this month the value of gold extracted since colonisation in Victoria is \$287.4 billion in today's terms, with Environment Minister Lily D'Ambrosio acknowledging Traditional Owners have received "very little" of the billions in royalties received by the government.

Mr Paton says the agreement – which provides for compensation and benefit-sharing – will materially improve the lives of Dja Dja Wurrung people, and enable DJAARA to influence decisions relating to the mine's environmental impact and eventual rehabilitation.

"It's difficult to overstate the importance of this agreement in terms of realising Traditional Owners' rights to Country. This agreement ensures DJAARA can contribute to the needs of Dja Dja Wurrung peoples, strengthen economic independence, and highlights Traditional Owners' rightful place as decision-makers on Country."

The agreement aligns with the 'tenure-blind' system of land management that has been consistently called for by Traditional Owners and is a core element of the Victorian Traditional Owner [Cultural Landscapes Strategy](#), which integrates Aboriginal conceptions of caring for Country with a Western worldview.

"DJAARA has found a way to ensure Country is cared for under a land ownership system that makes this difficult," says Mr Paton. "This agreement allows Traditional Owners to get on with the business of caring for Country. The Federation congratulates and stands with DJAARA at this historic moment for Traditional Owners' rights."

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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. [DJAARA](#) is a Federation member and its General Manager Cassandra Lewis is our Board Chair.

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