

Media Statement

15 July 2024

Victorian Traditional Owner groups ready for cultural management of Country through increased IPAs

The Federal Government's \$14.6 million commitment to 12 new areas of land managed by Traditional Owner groups is welcome news and a positive step towards increased Indigenous Protected Areas (IPA) spanning south-eastern Australia – which are possible despite extensive freehold title in Victoria, 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 Federal Government's announcement of an additional 7.5 million hectares of terrestrial and 450,000 hectares of sea Country receiving IPA status, which will be managed under agreement by Traditional Owners, and contribute to the Government's target to protect 30 per cent of land by 2030.

"Everyone benefits with an IPA," says Mr Paton.

"Traditional Owners have carefully and sustainably managed Country for millennia, bringing economic, ecological, and cultural benefits for everyone. Reinstating Traditional Owner groups in decision-making roles for Country is the right thing to do, and will lead to better outcomes for Country."

A progressive vision for Traditional Owner-led management of Country was articulated by Traditional Owners in the [Cultural Landscapes Strategy](#), which was launched in 2020 after a process facilitated by the Federation.

The document provides the strategic foundation for a Traditional Owner land management paradigm underpinned by cultural values, practices and interests, and which restores Traditional Owners' role as managers and decision-makers for Country.

The Federation has long supported IPAs and would welcome further IPA designations in Victoria, with management led and rangers employed by Traditional Owner groups.

"Implementing IPAs in Victoria requires specific approaches, but they're possible, and here," says Mr Paton.

Victoria currently has five terrestrial IPAs (Lake Condah, Deen Maar, Framlingham, Tyrendarra and Kurtonitj), and [two sea Country IPAs](#) under consultation on Gunditj Mirring and Eastern Maar and Gunaikurnai sea Country.

"We welcome the Federal Government's commitment to IPAs and stand ready to support this important work in returning Traditional Owner management of Country to Victoria, through innovative approaches that fit this context and help put Country back together," says Mr Paton.

"Traditional Owners want to manage Country as a cultural landscape, and IPAs allow this to happen."

– 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 Owners 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 in advancing shared interests in policy, economic opportunity and caring for Country.

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