

Media Statement

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Traditional Owner groups welcome recommended reforms for economic self-determination

Stronger support to engage in renewable energy development, increased core funding for Traditional Owner groups, and better recognition and resourcing for Indigenous intellectual and cultural property rights are among the recommendations of a parliamentary inquiry's new report into Indigenous economic prosperity welcomed by 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 today's release of the report of the Joint Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs' Inquiry into Economic Self-determination and Opportunities for First Nations Australians – an inquiry the Federation provided a [submission and testimony](#) to in May and July this year.

“It's clear the Committee has heard Traditional Owner groups' views and recommended reforms that could change the game for First Nations' economic development,” said Mr Paton.

“This report is significant for Traditional Owner groups – it hears and respects our ability to drive our own futures. I urge the Federal Government to implement its recommendations.”

The Federation welcomed recommendations in the Committee's report that – if implemented – would ratify the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, increase funding to Prescribed Bodies Corporate, strengthen Traditional Owner Corporations' capacity and capability to participate in the renewable energy sector, review future act provisions in the Native Title Act, increase access to investment capital, and embed a range of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property reforms – including ratifying the Nagoya Protocol and WIPO Treaty, investigating ways to certify Indigenous products and recognise collectively held knowledge, and facilitate access-and-benefit-sharing arrangements with native product producers.

“It's a significant suite of reforms with a common theme: respecting Traditional Owner groups as not stakeholders, employees or statistics, but as authoritative bodies advancing collective economic rights and interests to benefit community and Country,” said Mr Paton.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples expresses a right to self-determination, which articulates Indigenous groups' right to freely pursue their own economic, social and cultural development.

The Federation's Committee evidence illustrates a 'First Nations' economy' that recognises the commerce of collectively held rights, alongside an 'Aboriginal economy', which employs and benefits Indigenous individuals.

“While a strong and growing Aboriginal economy helps address individual social disadvantage, it is a strong and growing First Nations economy that better progresses self-determination,” says Mr Paton.

“This reports' reforms have the potential to power the First Nations' economy and transform Indigenous lives.”

– 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