

## Media Statement

20 May 2025

# Ongoing funding for Traditional Owner groups will deliver Budget self-determination outcomes

The Victorian Budget's commitments to truth, Treaty and self-determination for First Nations communities can only be delivered by sustained resourcing for Traditional Owner Corporations, 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 commitment of today's Budget to a range of Aboriginal-led health, education and culture initiatives, but criticised the Budget's failure to appropriately resource self-determination, partnership and decision-making for Traditional Owner groups.

"Self-determination is about respecting Aboriginal communities as decision-makers for our own lives," he said.

"While this Budget says all the right things about supporting Aboriginal self-determination, it doesn't deliver what's really needed to see Aboriginal decision-making and good outcomes for our communities.

"A Victorian Government committed to self-determination won't just fund programs and services around the edges – it will commit to properly supporting the Traditional Owner groups that hold collective rights on behalf of their communities."

Budget measures welcomed by the Federation include funding for:

- Traditional Owner participation in negotiating Recognition and Settlement Agreements
- Wamba Wamba Aboriginal Corporation
- Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation's co-management of Barmah National Park
- Initiatives to progress Victoria's Closing the Gap commitments
- Investment in our future leaders

But the Federation is concerned the Victorian Budget doesn't adequately resource Traditional Owners as partners to deliver on objectives relating to Aboriginal self-determination – calling specifically for ongoing and adequate core funding for Traditional Owner Corporations to continue representing and working for their communities.

"The Victorian Government can't say it supports self-determination if it won't adequately resource Traditional Owner Corporations to do their jobs representing their communities and keeping Country healthy," said Mr Paton.

"We call on the Government to recognise, respect and *resource* Traditional Owner Corporations to continue their important work for Aboriginal communities and 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. Victoria has 12 formally recognised Traditional Owner Corporations, which are inclusive and representative bodies with cultural authority to speak for community and Country across most of Victoria.

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