

## Media Statement

9 September 2025

# Federation welcomes Statewide Treaty

Statewide Treaty is a proud moment in history and a significant step forward for the Aboriginal community-level decision-making that will close the gap and ensure all Victorians have the same opportunities to live happy, safe, healthy lives, says the statewide body advocating for Traditional Owner groups' rights and interests.

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations welcomed today's introduction to Parliament of the bill that will formalise the first Treaty since Australia's colonisation – a statewide Treaty representing all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples living in Victoria, which will precede and support local-level Treaties to be negotiated by Traditional Owner groups.

Federation interim CEO Kaley Nicholson said Treaty was a once-in-a-century moment in history, and an opportunity for all Victorians to feel proud of the state's progress towards fair life outcomes for First Peoples.

"Aboriginal communities have been calling for Treaty for over 200 years and are the reason we're at this historic moment today," she said.

"The vision, courage and determination of our Ancestors, and the tireless efforts of those who have come before, have led us to this incredible moment. To see Treaty in my lifetime, today in Victoria, fills me with immense pride. And now, we can get on with the job of ensuring all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Victoria have access to the same chance as anyone else to live safe and healthy lives."

The Federation welcomes Treaty as a practical mechanism that will enable Traditional Owners and other First Peoples to make decisions about their lives, care for community and Country, and access the resources needed to provide for community and keep culture strong.

Ms Nicholson said stark gaps still exist in life outcomes between First Peoples and non-Indigenous Australians, and Treaty is a practical way to streamline programs, effectively allocate resources, and deliver meaningful outcomes.

"Aboriginal people still sleep rough on the land where our Ancestors' thousand-year-old stone houses still stand. In a society like Victoria, that's completely unacceptable. Aboriginal communities have taken care of ourselves for thousands of years, and now, through Treaty, we can continue to do so. And when Aboriginal People live good lives, strong in culture, everyone's better off."

The architecture of Statewide Treaty – comprising an elected representative body, a permanent truth-telling commission, and an independent monitor for Closing the Gap implementation – provides for consultation, accountability and decision-making, without limiting Parliament's authority, and supports Traditional Owner groups to in future negotiate their own Treaties with the Victorian Government.

The Federation contributed early [policy thinking](#) and direct Traditional Owner community engagement to Victoria's Treaty-making process and strongly supports Traditional Owner Treaty-making and initiatives that strengthen Traditional Owner groups' collective rights – including economic rights to support Nations' self-determination.

Currently, one Traditional Owner group – DJAARA, representing the Dja Dja Wurrung peoples of central Victoria – has entered into the Treaty Negotiations database, signalling its readiness to negotiate a Nation-level Treaty. Ms Nicholson said the Federation was ready to support Traditional Owner groups' ambitions for Nation-level Treaties.

"Statewide Treaty is only the beginning. Over the coming years, we'll see strong Traditional Owner groups, making history themselves, to ensure their communities and Country can be strong and healthy, forever."

– 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.

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