

Media Statement

9 September 2025

Benefit-sharing fund a welcome first step for Traditional Owner inclusion in renewable energy transition

Renewable energy legislation passed today is a welcome and important step towards Traditional Owner groups' inclusion in the clean energy transition – but the true extent of the Victorian Government's commitment to repairing past wrongs and ensuring Traditional Owners' economic prosperity will lie in the strength of accompanying regulations, says the statewide body advocating for Traditional Owner groups' rights and interests.

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations acknowledges the VicGrid Stage 2 Reform bill as an important step towards the transmission network required for a clean and reliable energy supply for Victoria, and in particular welcomes its Traditional Owners Fund, which recognises the impact of renewables infrastructure development and operation on their Country.

Federation interim CEO Kaley Nicholson congratulated resources minister Lily D'Ambrosio on this step towards supporting Traditional Owner groups.

"A dedicated fund for Traditional Owners is wholesale recognition of our connection to Country and how infrastructure projects impact Country and community – historically, without our knowledge, consent or benefit," she said.

"The Traditional Owner Fund signals things will be done differently in the clean energy transition, and for that reason, the Federation welcomes VicGrid's commitment to Traditional Owner communities."

The Federation contributed to VicGrid's benefit-sharing consultation process, including recommending required agreement-making between energy project proponents and Traditional Owner groups.

While agreement-making is standard practice in northern Australia, it was not picked up in the legislation passed today – but forthcoming guidelines are an opportunity to improve the model.

"Successive governments denied Traditional Owners the wealth generated from our natural resources, and the renewable energy transition was a chance to do things differently," said Ms Nicholson.

"While we're disappointed that agreement-making between energy project proponents and Traditional Owner groups has not been required directly in the legislation, we welcome the opportunity to continue working with VicGrid on the development of forthcoming regulations to ensure Victorian Traditional Owner groups can engage with renewable energy proponents on a more even playing field, and share benefits with community and Country."

The Federation continues to advocate for Traditional Owner groups' rights in Victoria's plans for renewable energy infrastructure development: calling for required agreement-making; sustained funding to ensure Traditional Owner corporations are adequately resourced to engage with project proponents; Traditional Owner groups' free, prior and informed consent on projects; pathways for Traditional Owner groups to become project proponents if they wish; and genuine partnership between Traditional Owner groups, proponents and the Victorian Government, to ensure the past exclusion of Traditional Owner groups from development of their Country isn't repeated.

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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 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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