



Media Statement

9 December 2025

Traditional Owners welcome Apology to First Peoples

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations welcomes today's apology by the Victorian Government to First Peoples as a significant moment in history and giant step towards true land justice.

"I'm waking up today as a descendent of people whose Country, culture and language were taken by the state, and I'm feeling hope, and I'm feeling pride," said Federation CEO Kaley Nicholson.

"This apology is meaningful, it's historic, it's a high-water mark for reconciliation in this state, and it's a critical step in a long road toward a better future, where we'll see mob strong and proud, back in the driver's seat, leading change in their communities."

Generations of Victorian children will learn the state's colonial history after Statewide Treaty committed the Victorian Government to implementing the findings of Yoorrook Justice Commission into the school curriculum – increasing awareness of the land dispossession, massacres, deliberate destruction of language and culture for which Victorian Premier Jacinta Allen today apologised on behalf of the state.

Ms Nicholson said that the apology, while deeply significant, was just the start of recognising and addressing harm, and Traditional Owners will be watching to ensure real action follows the words spoken today.

"Sorry means you don't do it again, and that's why today's apology is so significant: it's the Victorian Government's commitment to our community that these horrors won't be repeated in contemporary form. Our land is ours to manage, our languages are ours to speak, our culture is ours to celebrate, and our futures are ours to determine."

The Federation believes Traditional Owner Treaty-making is a critical part of redressing past injustices and ensuring Traditional Owner communities are supported for strong, self-determined futures, and in 2019 assisted the Victorian Government in shaping Treaty through comprehensive Traditional Owner Treaty engagement, followed by a series of Treaty discussion papers scoping out a [Treaty framework](#) for Victoria.

Victoria's 12 formally recognised Traditional Owner Corporations represent their Traditional Owner communities: collectively speaking for nearly 80 per cent of Victoria, [comprising](#) one-sixth of Victoria's \$700 million Aboriginal economy, and driving regional Victoria's employment and economic activity.

Ms Nicholson reiterated the Federation's call for the Victorian Government to ensure Traditional Owner Corporations can negotiate Treaties in good faith and with adequate resourcing, by immediately ceasing policies that undermine Traditional Owners' rights in land and resources that would otherwise be the subject of forthcoming Treaties.

"I want to see a future where Traditional Owner groups are truly empowered, and that starts here, with meaningful support for their self-determined direction and progress towards land justice."

— 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 – inclusive and representative family group-governed organisations with cultural authority to speak for Country and community – who recognised they could be stronger together in advancing shared interests in policy, economic opportunity and caring for Country.

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