

## Media Statement

5 May 2026

# Traditional Owners ready to partner to get most bang for Victorian Budget bucks

Traditional Owners are ready to partner on plans for their Country and communities announced in today's Victorian Budget, and would welcome the opportunity to co-design and deliver activities across the full Budget program, says the body advocating for Victorian Traditional Owner groups' rights and interests.

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations believes partnering with Traditional Owner Corporations on activities spanning housing, infrastructure, environment and more would ensure the Victorian Government's Budget commitments are delivered efficiently, effectively, and with maximum output for investment.

Federation CEO Kaley Nicholson said the systems of decision-making that enable Traditional Owner groups to self-determine how funded programs happen on their Country is the crucial element of the 2026-27 Victorian Budget, over the specific figure it allocates to Aboriginal affairs.

"Traditional Owner rights and interests can never be constrained to a single Budget line item," she said.

"Fundamentally, what we want is self-determination; our right to have a say over what happens on our Country recognised. That comes from governments sharing power with and trusting Traditional Owners."

Items in the Victorian Budget providing opportunity for partnership with Traditional Owners include delivery of:

- reforms to improve public land usage (\$37 million invested)
- regional education services and infrastructure (\$207 million committed)
- health infrastructure upgrades and improvements (\$567 million committed)
- upgrades to regional transport infrastructure (\$445 million committed)
- construction of 7,000 new affordable homes (\$860 million committed)
- agricultural energy and biosecurity and drought resilience upgrades (\$159 million committed)

The Federation has consistently called for partnership between the Victorian Government and Traditional Owner Corporations across issues ranging from critical minerals mining, to management of public land, to rights in water, and is an active voice in the Closing the Gap Partnership Forum on self-determination and systemic reform.

Central to this work is understanding the authority and capability of Traditional Owner Corporations as authoritative economic actors who make decisions for Country.

Ms Nicholson said Traditional Owner Corporations could deliver for the whole Victorian community if their cultural authority, economic activity and sophisticated governance were properly recognised.

"Traditional Owners have a demonstrated track record in delivering for their communities. We want to see the next 12 months of Victorian Government activity reflect and respect that.

"Traditional Owners are decision-makers and rights-holders for Country, but are too often reduced by governments to mere beneficiaries of their programs, services, and agenda. This fundamental misunderstanding can, and should, be corrected with partnership, and today's Budget is as good as any point to begin."

– 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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