

Media Statement

11 October 2026

Regional royalties pledge misses economic opportunity without Traditional Owner agreement-making

The Victorian Government's royalty-sharing election commitment may miss one of regional Victoria's most important development drivers, if it fails to introduce promised legislation for agreement-making with Traditional Owner communities alongside Royalties for Regions, says the statewide body advocating for Traditional Owner groups' rights and interests.

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations calls on the Victorian Government to swiftly introduce promised legislation to enliven an agreed-upon Traditional Owner Benefit-Sharing Model that will facilitate Traditional Owner involvement in agreement-making over the planning, sustainable development of, and equitable benefit-sharing from critical minerals mining on their Country.

The call follows the Government's new election promise to reinvest critical minerals mining royalties into regions. Without explicit mention of a Traditional Owner role in the new scheme, and alongside the delay to the promised legislative reform for agreement-making, the Federation is concerned Royalties for Regions misses the key groups with the potential to reinvigorate regional economies.

"Traditional Owner Corporations are regional Victoria's best-kept secret: economic powerhouses with untapped potential," said Federation CEO Kaley Nicholson.

"They're some of their regions' largest and fastest-growing employers, of both Aboriginal people and the wider community. They're invigorating regional economies, investing millions each year, and preventing brain drain out of our regions. And they're capable economic actors, ready for investment. But they're too often forgotten by a Government that thinks Aboriginal prosperity is a social justice issue – not an economic opportunity.

"The Victorian Government must recognise the capability and opportunity in Traditional Owner Corporations, centre them in Royalties for Regions, and expedite promised legislation to assure their ongoing role as the critical minerals sector develops."

Traditional Owner Corporations have worked closely with the Victorian Government's Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action to co-design the benefit-sharing model and are developing a collective framework to help guide industry expectations of engagement and partnership. Groups are ready to see progress in a mature approach to critical minerals sector development that appropriately includes Traditional Owners.

Ms Nicholson said Traditional Owners were ready for partnership with a Government willing to see their economic capability, leadership, and impact.

"Traditional Owners want to leverage opportunities for economic development in a way that's sustainable, responsible, and promotes prosperity for Traditional Owner communities and the wider regions they support."

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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 – 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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