

First Peoples'
Assembly of Victoria
Annual Report to
Parliament 2020



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Assembly of
Victoria





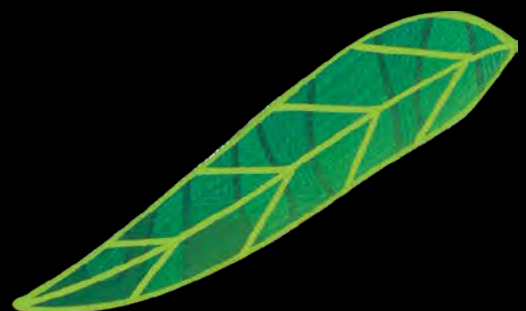
Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country within Victoria. Land that has never been ceded. We also acknowledge all other First Nations people living in Victoria. We pay our respects to the Elders and ancestors who came before us; who have taught us culture, kinship, connection and Lore. We say thank you to the trailblazers, who have come before us and paved the path that we follow in solidarity today. From the coastal mob, to the river people, from the highland to the desert, the urban and all of the areas that the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria represents, and whose spirit has touched this Treaties process. We admire your strength, courage, and fight, and thank you for continuing to walk along this journey with us.



“Our Elders fought for Treaty for years. Now we are Elders and we have the opportunity to help realise their dreams. As we move forward, we are truly standing on the shoulders of giants. We feel their support and we will not let them down. We must make this happen”

**VICTORIAN ELDER,
VTAC CONSULTATIONS, 2019**





Co-Chairs' Foreword

It is with pride that we present the first annual report of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (the Assembly) to the Parliament of Victoria. This report speaks to the progress made towards Treaties since the establishment of the Assembly and its first meeting on 10 December 2019, as well as to the hard work undertaken by Assembly Members to bring us to this point.

The report signals more clearly than ever the new relationship between Aboriginal people and the Parliament of Victoria. Traditional Owners of Victoria have never before engaged with Parliament on equal terms. The Assembly is Parliament's sovereign equal, comprising democratically elected Members who have been honoured with the responsibility of representing and advocating for Traditional Owners, and the broader Victorian Aboriginal community.

To demonstrate our combined strength, and to help build connections between Parliament and our membership, the report profiles each Assembly Member. We invite Members of Parliament to connect with the Assembly Members within their electorate that are responsible for representing Traditional Owners and other Aboriginal Victorians throughout the Treaty process.

As outlined in this report, we are ready on our part to negotiate the elements which will underpin substantive Treaty negotiations. The election of the Assembly's membership marked a turning point in the Treaty process. Assembly advocacy has already begun to influence policy—at its inaugural meeting, the Assembly called for a Stolen Generations Redress Scheme, and at its June Chamber meeting we called for a Truth-telling process. The Government has committed to both.

This demonstrates the power of our collective voice in achieving change in areas where progress is long overdue.

As required by section 42 of the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* (Vic), this report sets out the progress

the Assembly has made towards establishing, by agreement with the State, a Treaty Authority, a Treaty negotiation framework, and a self-determination fund. As outlined within, the voices of Traditional Owners, and other Aboriginal people, are at the heart of all Assembly policies and positions on Treaties.

We are optimistic about the progress towards Treaties, but we are clear eyed about the scale of the task before us. We are attempting something unprecedented in this country. Since December 2019, Assembly Members have worked hard to support their communities to lead the discussions that shape our agreement-making on the architecture for Treaties. What sustains us is a spirit of unity, born of mutual understanding and genuine reconciliation.

We extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to all Assembly Members, as well as to the first Treaty Advancement Commissioner, Jill Gallagher AO, and her staff. We also thank Eleanor Bourke, Vicki Clarke, and Dan Turnbull, the members of the first, interim, Board of the Assembly, and all members of the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group between 2016 and 2019.

Finally, we thank all Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria, and all members of Aboriginal communities in Victoria that have seized this opportunity. Aboriginal people have seized this opportunity to change the status quo for the sake of their children. Our ancestors fought before us for dignity and self-determination; for the sake of our own descendants, we must do the same.

We welcome all Parliamentarians and all Victorians on this path, walking with us.

About the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria



The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria is the first body of its kind in Australia.



Established in December 2019, the Assembly is made up of 32 members – all proud Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria.



These Aboriginal leaders were chosen by their communities to represent community views.



Twenty-one representatives were determined by a statewide Aboriginal community vote held between September and October 2019, and 10 representatives were appointed to reserved seats by formally recognised Traditional Owner groups. Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation have not appointed a representative to date.



The Assembly is the voice for Traditional Owners of Country in Victoria and other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in Victoria in the Treaty process with the State.

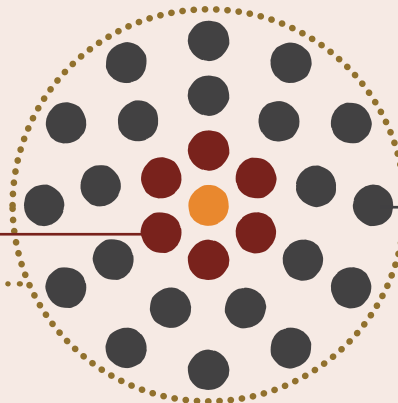
How is the Assembly structured?

Executive

- Nine directors elected by the Assembly members
- Led by Co-Chairs elected by all representatives
- Implements decisions of the Assembly and leads the agenda

Elders' Voice

- Form is to be determined
- Provides cultural strength and advice to the Assembly



Assembly Chamber

(32 members)

- Meets quarterly to make all key Assembly decisions on the Treaty process.
- Members responsible for regularly engaging with their communities before each meeting.

General seats

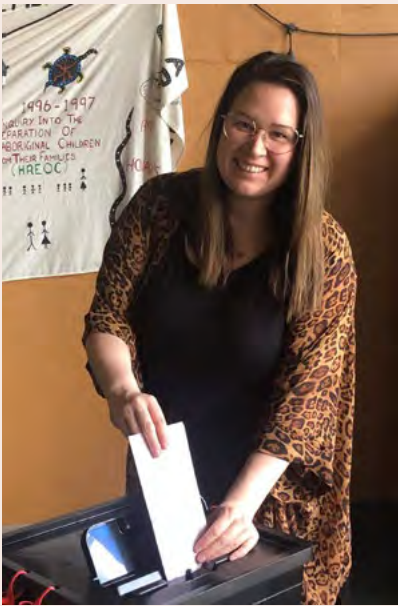
(21 seats)

Elected by statewide vote in 2019. All Aboriginal Victorians living in Victoria have the opportunity to vote every three years.

Reserved seats

(currently up to 11 seats)

One representative appointed by each formally recognised Traditional Owner group.



The 2019 Assembly election

In November 2019, the results of the first election for the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria were announced.

More than 70 Traditional Owners across Victoria had put their hands up to stand as candidates.

The Assembly election was a historic event, with parallels to the elections to the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC). The Assembly election was independent of state and federal elections, featured a stand-alone electoral roll, voting by people aged 16 years and over, a gender quota, online enrolment and voting, and the capacity for same-time enrolment and voting.

The election was held over five weeks, with dedicated polling booths at large centres and 25 mobile polling locations across Victoria, including in prisons. Combined with the option to cast an online or postal ballot, this meant that all Aboriginal people could participate.

