



Treaty Roadshow Report - October 2018

Reconciliation Victoria organised a series of local regional public meetings across the state in collaboration with the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission (VTAC) and local councils. These morning and afternoon teas were aimed principally at informing the non-Aboriginal community about the Treaty process and the role of the Treaty Commission. Separate meetings were organised in each location by VTAC for the local Aboriginal communities.

In each regional centre Reconciliation Victoria visited with the Treaty Roadshow, we approached local councils inviting them to co-host an event with ourselves and VTAC, inviting mayors, councillors and staff to attend as well as the broader community.

In most cases, council enthusiastically accepted the invitation, organising the venue (often a council building, library or art gallery) and catering, and helping with publicity and promotion. When a council was unable to assist, we handled venues, catering and publicity ourselves.

Promotion included letters of invitation to Local Reconciliation Groups, neighbouring councils, members of parliament, local Greens and ALP branches, school and universities, as well as a media release to local ABC Radio and the local newspapers.

Each morning or afternoon tea lasted around an hour, with either a local Mayor or Reconciliation Victoria staff introducing Treaty Commissioner Jill Gallagher AO. The Commissioner would speak for around half an hour, before fielding questions from an engaged audience for 15-20 minutes. There was then an opportunity for informal conversations over a cup of tea.

The main messages from the Treaty Commissioner were as follows:

- Every Victorian will benefit from Treaty
- Treaty is something for which Aboriginal people have been campaigning for a long time
- Australia is the only developed Commonwealth nation without Treaty
- Treaty is the “unfinished business” of reconciliation
- Australia’s history is one of dispossession, discrimination and racism
- Treaty will not impact on private land
- Her view is that there may be multiple treaties, not just a single treaty
- Victorian Government is to be congratulated for passing the first Treaty legislation in Australia
- The role of VTAC is not to negotiate Treaty, or decide what is ‘in’ or ‘out’
- The role of VTAC is to consult widely with the Aboriginal Community, and to establish an Aboriginal Representative Body to be constituted of Victorian Traditional Owners and voted for by all Victorian Aboriginal people
- VTAC is currently working on culturally appropriate boundaries and on developing an Aboriginal Electoral Roll.

- Treaty could potentially include reparations, truth-telling, language maintenance and revival, land purchases, a voice to parliament, increased focus on Aboriginal culture and history in schools, increase in visibility of Aboriginal place names and language, etc
- Local government will be crucial in building support for Treaty
- Reconciliation Victoria's role is critical in informing non-Aboriginal community about Treaty
- The Treaty Commissioner has been overwhelmed by support from the non-Aboriginal community thus far

At each event there was an opportunity for community members to leave their own mark on the Treaty process. VTAC invited Aboriginal attendees to leave a message about Treaty, pictorially or in words, on a possum skin cloak, and non-Aboriginal attendees were invited to leave a message on a kangaroo skin. Attendees could also take home a Treaty t-shirt or pin, as well as sign up to the VTAC and Reconciliation Victoria mailing lists. [Maggolee](#) flyers were also available at most events and announced as a valuable resource for local councils in working in partnership with local Aboriginal communities.

Details about each location on the roadshow are below. Copies of media reports available on request.

Grampians - Mallee Roadshow 18-22 June 2018

BALLARAT - Monday June 18

Co-hosted with VTAC and the City of Ballarat and held at the Ballarat Mechanics Institute to an audience of roughly 20-30 people. A few members of a newly forming local reconciliation group attended along with local council and some local Aboriginal community. A Reconciliation Victoria staff member attended.

HORSHAM - Tuesday June 19

Co-hosted with VTAC and Horsham Rural City Council and held at the Horsham Town Hall.

MILDURA - Wednesday June 20

Co-hosted with VTAC and Mildura Rural City Council at Quest Mildura.

The session was attended by a number of Councillors, senior management from Council, executives and staff from local organisations and members of the community. The session inspired increased interest among Councillors about how MRCC can better engage with the Treaty process and what their Council role can be through their Reconciliation Action Plan.

Subsequently, the RAP working group has requested an information session specifically on Treaty for all of Council, the executive, senior management and Council's Aboriginal Action Committee.

SWAN HILL - Friday June 22

Co-hosted with VTAC and Swan Hill Rural City Council at the Swan Hill Visitor Information Centre.

Reconciliation Victoria Council member Vicki Clark attended the event through her role at Swan Hill council.

Loddon - Hume Roadshow 16-20 July 2018

All Loddon-Hume Roadshows attended by a Reconciliation Victoria staff member.

BENDIGO - Monday 16 July

Co-hosted with VTAC and City of Bendigo

An afternoon tea at the Capital Theatre in Bendigo, with around 100 attendees. The event was strongly supported by council staff, with many councillors and council officers attending from the City of Bendigo and Mt Alexander Shire. Local Reconciliation Group members from Bendigo and Castlemaine also attended. There were strong and sometimes emotional expressions of support from the audience for Treaty. One concern that was raised was that the members of the Stolen Generation might be excluded from the process.

The event received good media coverage in both local papers and on ABC Local Radio.

ECHUCA - Tuesday 17 July

Co-hosted with VTAC (local council invited but declined to co-host due to prior commitments)

Held at St Mary's Parish Centre, around 45 people participated in this event including many Aboriginal people from the Wolithiga Clan. Although the Campaspe Council had prior commitments that prevented them from co-hosting, the Corporate Strategy Manager was very helpful in providing a list of organisations and individuals who might be interested in attending including service organisations, the local Landcare group, historical society and local health network. Staff and Councillors from Campaspe, Gannawarra and Loddon Councils were all in attendance, including the Mayor of Loddon Shire.

A local Elder expressed concern that Clans were in danger of being excluded from the process and they felt they had not so far been consulted.

The event received good coverage in the Riverine Herald.

SHEPPARTON - Wednesday 18 July

Co-hosted with VTAC and City of Greater Shepparton

Held at the Lake Park Hotel for a crowd of around 60, this event was well-attended by Mayors, councillors and staff from both Shepparton and Strathbogie councils. Around 90% of the participants were non-Aboriginal. Discussion included a question from a councillor on how Treaty would impact local government. Another councillor sought advice on what councils can do to be support the Treaty process. One attendee raised a concern about the benefit of Treaty to Aboriginal people living just on the other, NSW side of the Murray, Cummeragunja.

The event received good media coverage both before and after in the Shepparton News.

WODONGA - Thursday 19 July

Co-hosted with VTAC and Wodonga Council

Held at Arts Space Wodonga to a group of around 20 with a 50/50 Aboriginal/non-Aboriginal crowd, this event was attended by councillors and staff from Wodonga Shire. It received good media coverage in the Border Mail.

WANGARATTA - Friday 20 July

Co-hosted with VTAC and Wangaratta Council

Held at Wangaratta Library, this event was attended by around 50 people, of whom about 90% were non-Aboriginal community members. Mayors, councillors and staff from Wangaratta, Benalla and Alpine councils all also attended. There was a strong opinion expressed by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal attendees that Treaty couldn't happen without first resolving the local Bangerang's lack of status as a Registered Aboriginal Party.

The event received good media coverage before and after in the Wangaratta Chronicle.

Gippsland Roadshow 29th – 30th August 2018

Both Gippsland Roadshow locations attended by a Reconciliation Victoria staff member.

Drouin – Wednesday 29 August

Co-hosted with VTAC and Baw Baw Shire Council

The Victorian Treaty Commissioner Jill Gallagher, AO was invited by the Baw Baw Shire Council to attend a morning tea in Drouin to speak with residents and Aboriginal community members about the role of the Treaty Advancement Commission and the task ahead of progressing Treaty developments.

Proceedings commenced with a Welcome to Country by respected Kurnai elder, Cheryl Drayton, which was followed by a speech from Baw Baw Shire Council Mayor Joe Gauci who called on residents to stand alongside Aboriginal people "as allies" to find healing and work collectively and harmoniously towards a Treaty.

The honourable Treaty Commissioner, Jill Gallagher, AO then took to the podium to provide a comprehensive overview of her role and the role of the Treaty Advancement Commission. This was followed by an historical reflection on the Batman Treaty and then some valuable insights on how Treaties have been done successfully with First Nations people of Canada and the United States.

When question time commenced, it was clear to see that the audience was very moved by what Jill had shared and many began sharing stories. One resident said she had attended the event because she had Indigenous grandchildren and she wanted them to grow up to be happy and proud of their Indigenous heritage. Many said they wished Treaties had been brought into Australia when they were growing up. They were always passionate about learning about Aboriginal culture but felt disappointed because they couldn't find places or spaces to access and receive Aboriginal cultural knowledge and stories. Another man said he had recently moved to Gippsland and felt Local Governments weren't doing enough to promote Aboriginal cultural heritage, he decided to work with local Aboriginal people to initiate and develop cultural learning projects in his workplace to try and support and create more visibility of Aboriginal culture in the region.

It truly was a gathering of people clearly committed to supporting the advancement of localised treaties, but amongst the sea of positive supporters, there was also some who did confess to coming to the event because they still had fears that a Treaty with Aboriginal people would mean a loss of wealth and land for existing non-Aboriginal settlers.

Jill allayed such fears, stressing that Treaties with Traditional Owner Groups would not be about land occupancy, but rather about enabling Aboriginal culture to take pride of place in our communities, to enable us to hit reset the button, to accept our history and be willing to create a path towards healing and recognition.

Overall, the Drouin morning tea was a warm and welcoming introduction to the possibilities and benefits of Treaty discussions moving forward and hats off must go to Baw Baw Shire Council, particularly to their passionate Social and Community Planner, Elizabeth Willems, who worked tirelessly and efficiently to make the event welcoming and culturally safe for all.

So much so, that the Kurnai Traditional Owners have requested the Treaty Commissioner return to Drouin to host another community meeting so all Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal residents from the Drouin/Warrigal region can come together in one space to share their thoughts on what a treaty could look like in their community.

Morwell – Thursday 30th August

Co-hosted with VTAC and Latrobe City Council

Approximately 25-30 people attended this event, with representation from several senior managers and Councillors, including the Mayor as well as some local Aboriginal community members and Local Aboriginal Network Brokers. A representative from Federation University expressed their support for Treaty and offered their assistance. The Mayor was interested to know where to from here and how local council could inform the broader community about Treaty and their role.

The event received positive media coverage from the LaTrobe Express paper after the event.