TREATY FACT SHEET

What is a Treaty?

- A treaty is a negotiated and legally binding agreement between two or more parties, particularly states, nations, governments or First Peoples.
- Many European countries signed treaties with the First Peoples of the lands they colonised, including those in Canada and New Zealand.
- A treaty can say or do anything the parties agree on and that are within their respective powers.
- Treaties can contain statements of principle, guidelines for future relationships and guarantees and promises about land, sovereignty and identity.
- A treaty is an evolving document that may go through various iterations or be updated at regular intervals to ensure it accurately reflects the priorities of the day.
- A Treaty is the best mechanism to achieve self-determination for Victoria's Aboriginal community and will give them a legally recognised voice for the first time.
- Research from around the world has shown that First Nations peoples that have achieved self-determination experience better outcomes in terms of health, employment, economic development, education, housing and justice.

What could Treaty look like in Victoria?

- It's important to recognise there will be various treaties that will all look different as each Traditional Owner group will negotiate its own treaty with the Victorian Government, and highlight its own priorities.
- These treaties could acknowledge past wrongs and provide reparations for past injustices; recognise or provide better protection for specific Aboriginal rights; provide a basis for self-government and structures for decision making; allocate resources.
- Treaty *won't* involve negotiations over ownership of private land.

Where is the Treaty process up to in Victoria?

Aboriginal people in Victoria have never ceded sovereignty and have long called for Treaty with government. Victoria has progressed further than any other state in this process.

- **February 2016** – At a meeting with State Government, Traditional Owners called for Treaty.
- **June 2016 -** The Aboriginal Treaty Working Group was established and began community consultations across the state.
- **January 2018** - The Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission was established, with Jill Gallagher AO appointed as Commissioner. The commission's job is to maintain momentum for the Treaty process and establish the democratically elected First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.
- **June 2018** - History was made with the passage through the Victorian Parliament of Australia's first ever Treaty legislation.
- **September - October 2019** – The election of the 33 representatives who will make up the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria will be held, with all Aboriginal Victorians eligible to vote. The Assembly will work with the Victorian Government to establish 'ground rules' for Treaty negotiations, including who can negotiate and what is up for negotiation.

Once the ground rules are established, negotiations of treaties with various Traditional Owner groups can begin.

It's important to acknowledge that there are different views in the Victorian Aboriginal community as to whether or not the Treaty development and consultation process has so far been effective.

Why is Treaty important for non-Aboriginal Victorians?

- A Treaty will lay solid foundations on which Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal Victorians can build stronger relationships based on respect and a shared understanding of our history.
- A Treaty is likely to result in improvements in health, education and employment outcomes for Aboriginal Victorians – this will strengthen Victoria's society overall.
- As the first state in Australia to negotiate a Treaty, all Victorians can be proud of this effort to build a more fair and just society.

What can the non-Aboriginal community do to support Treaty?

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders represent just 2% of the Victorian voting public and the Treaty process doesn't yet have bipartisan support. That's why it's important for the non-Aboriginal community to demonstrate their support for Treaty to our political leaders.

It's important to be aware that each Traditional Owner group has different priorities, needs and practices. This means that showing respect and support for First Peoples will look different depending on where you live.

<u>You can:</u>

- Get informed and stay connected – check out some of the websites listed below and follow us on Facebook. You can also sign up to receive our monthly eNews updates.
- Talk to your family, friends and work colleagues about Treaty and what it means – do your bit to help dispel any myths.
- Talk to us about holding a Local Treaty Conversation to help inform your community – be sure to respect the diversity of views in your local Aboriginal community.
- Let political leaders know how important Treaty is by contacting your state MP.
- Contact and lobby your local council – find out what they are doing to support Treaty and whether they could do more.
- Use the media and social media – call talkback radio programs or write letters to the editor to let media outlets know your view, and that coverage of this issue is what their audience wants. Also, correct them if they get things wrong. Use social media to help inform your own network.
- Invite a speaker to come to your school/local club/workplace to help spread the message of why Treaty is important for all Victorians.

Further information:
Reconciliation Victoria – http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au/treaty
Deadly Questions – www.deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au
First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria - https://www.firstpeoplesvic.org/
Clan Elders Council on Treaty - https://greensfortreaty.org.au/
Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission - https://victreatyadvancement.org.au/
Aboriginal Victoria Treaty Page - https://w.www.vic.gov.au/aboriginalvictoria/treaty.html
Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations - https://www.fvtoc.com.au/
ANTaR Victoria - https://antarvictoria.org.au/treaty