



IT'S TIME FOR TREATY

A GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS AND GROUPS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Reconciliation Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria and recognises their continuing connection to lands, waters and community. We pay our respects to those communities and their cultures as well as Elders past, present and emerging.

We acknowledge the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which our office sits. We acknowledge that First Peoples have called for Treaty for many years and hope that this aspiration is fulfilled and embraced by all Victorians.

“Reconciliation Victoria’s Treaty Toolkits are grounded in our core goals and our commitment to support truth telling, justice and self-determination for and with First Peoples. The resources and actions within will support individuals, organisations, and institutions to engage meaningfully with Treaty in their local communities.”

Shane Charles and Andrew Gunstone,
Co-Chairs of Reconciliation Victoria

“Treaty is for all Victorians and will allow us to come together, share and listen so we can build a deeper understanding and a foundation of mutual respect on the journey towards reconciliation.”

Diana David,
former CEO of Reconciliation Victoria

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Reconciliation Victoria would like to thank Bank Australia for their ongoing support.

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A note on language: Throughout this toolkit “First Peoples” is used to refer to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The use of a capitalised “Treaty” refers to the many possible outcomes of current negotiations and may refer to multiple treaties.

ABOUT RECONCILIATION VICTORIA

Reconciliation Victoria is the statewide body for reconciliation, acting as a focal point for advancing a deeper understanding, respect, truth, and justice for and with First Peoples.

Reconciliation Victoria focuses efforts on local governments, community groups and the education sector as they provide opportunities to make significant and widespread progress in reconciliation.

Our vision is a Victorian identity that reflects our true history, and promotes and celebrates First Peoples' cultures, equity and self-determination.

Find out more about us at
www.reconciliationvic.org.au



FIRST PEOPLES AND VICTORIA

First Peoples have lived in Victoria for many tens of thousands of years, with evidence around Moyjil in Warrnambool showing probability that First Peoples have been here for at least 120 000 years.

There is much diversity among the First Peoples of Victoria. Different Traditional Owners have different creation stories, totems, art styles and cultures. There are upwards of 44 different Language Groups, and within certain groups there are also different clans.

There are currently 11 Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) across Victoria. At this stage, not all Traditional Owners have RAP status, however one of the aims of Treaty is to achieve this formal recognition for all Traditional Owner groups across Victoria.

It is crucial that when working for and with First Peoples you recognise they are not a homogeneous group.

To learn more about the Country on which you live, work and learn on, visit the Maggolee website at www.maggolee.org.au

Knowing the Traditional Owners of the land you are on is an important aspect of cultural competency.

It is also important to acknowledge that, despite the severe impacts of colonisation on First Peoples in Victoria, links to Country have never been broken. Traditional cultural, spiritual and economic links to Country are enduring.


WHAT IS A TREATY?

First Peoples have long called for Treaty but for many in the wider community the idea of Treaty may still be a cause for confusion.

After the colonisation of Australia, a treaty between First Peoples and the colonisers was never signed. You may have heard of the invalid Batman “treaty” of 1835 which was an attempt to take advantage of the local Traditional Owners.

Treaties between First Peoples and colonisers have been signed in many different countries including New Zealand and Canada.

The Treaty process has never advanced as far as it has in Victoria. Treaty is something that will benefit everyone as it is an important step towards reconciliation.



Simply, a treaty
is an agreement
between parties.



THE STORY OF TREATY SO FAR

After a series of Self-determination Forums with Victorian Traditional Owners throughout 2016, the Victorian Government committed to exploring Treaty. An Aboriginal Treaty Working Group was established in 2016, and Aunty Jill Gallagher AO was appointed as the independent Victoria Treaty Advancement Commissioner in 2017.

The Victorian Parliament passed the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act* in June 2018. This contained the legal power to establish an elected First Peoples representative body – The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria. The current First Peoples' Assembly was elected September – October 2019.

It is important to note that the current Treaty process is not supported by all First Peoples in Victoria.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF TREATY?

Treaty will lead to significant benefits for all Victorians.

As the first state in Australia to reach this stage of the Treaty process, all Victorians can be proud of the efforts to build a more just and fair society.

The efforts of Elders in fighting for Treaty for many years is something to be respected and celebrated.

A Treaty will likely result in improvements in cultural rights and recognition, health, education, economic development and employment outcomes, something that will strengthen the whole state of Victoria.

Importantly, a Treaty will lay solid foundations on which First Peoples and the wider community can build stronger relationships based on respect and a shared understanding of our history.

Treaty is for all Victorians and will allow us to come together, share and listen so we can build a deeper understanding and a foundation of mutual respect on the journey towards reconciliation.



RECONCILIATION VICTORIA'S VIEW ON TREATY

Reconciliation Victoria has long supported the aspirations of First Peoples in calling for self-determination.

We believe truth-telling is an essential part of the Treaty process and that it supports First Peoples to achieve self-determination.

We acknowledge that there is a diversity of views among Traditional Owners in Victoria about the effectiveness of the current Treaty process. We are pleased that the First Peoples' Assembly is investigating alternate pathways for membership so the voices of all Victorian Traditional Owners can be heard in this process.

We believe Treaty will be the most significant step towards self-determination ever taken in Victoria and that Treaty possibilities will strengthen reconciliation pathways and progress.

To ensure the benefits of Treaty are delivered, the voices of all Victorian Traditional Owners need to be heard and respected. This is an exciting time for all Victorians and the Treaty process is cause for great optimism.

FIRST PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY STRUCTURE



CO-CHAIRS

| | |
|--|--|
| Marcus Stewart Taungurung Representative | Geraldine Atkinson North East Representative |
|--|--|

EXECUTIVE REPRESENTATIVES

| | | | | | | |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| Rueben Berg Metropolitan | Tracey Evans Metropolitan | Jamie Lowe Eastern Maar | Melissa Jones First People of the Millewa-Mallee | Troy McDonald Gunai Kurnai Land and Waters | Ngarra Murray Metropolitan | Trent Nelson Dja Dja Wurrung |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|

MEMBER REPRESENTATIVES

| | | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|---|
| Jason Kelly North West | Sean Fagan Wadawurrung | Muriel Bamblett Metropolitan | Peter Hood South East | Jordan Edwards South West | Leanne Miller North East |
| Andrew Gardiner Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung | Carolyn Briggs AM Metropolitan | Dylan Clarke Barengi Gadjin Land Council | Raylene Harradine North West | Esmerelda Bamblett Metropolitan | Donna Wright Gunditj Mirring |
| Trevor Gallagher Metropolitan | Alice Pepper South East | Travis Morgan North East | Matthew Burns Metropolitan | Michael Bell South West |  |
|  | Shane Clark Bunurong Land Council | Alister Thorpe Metropolitan | Charmaine Clarke South West | Jacinta Chaplin North West | Kaylene Williamson South East |



For more information on The Assembly,
visit www.firstpeoplesvic.org

THE FIRST PEOPLES' ASSEMBLY OF VICTORIA

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (The Assembly) is an elected representative body for First Peoples in Victoria. As the graphic on the left shows, it is made up of elected members and reserved seat holders. Every member is a Victorian Traditional Owner.

It is important to note that The Assembly will not negotiate Treaty. Its main role is to establish:



THE TREATY AUTHORITY:

an independent umpire throughout the Treaty process.

THE TREATY NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK:

which will set up how Treaties can be agreed to in Victoria.

A SELF-DETERMINATION FUND:

so First Peoples can be on a level playing field with government.

ELDERS' VOICE

The Assembly is establishing an Elders' Voice to ensure Elders are at the heart of a culturally strong Treaty process.

The Elders' Voice will provide Elders of Victoria with opportunities to exercise their cultural authority and experience to strengthen Victoria's progress towards Treaty by providing guidance, wisdom and cultural oversight to the work of the Assembly.

THE ROLE OF COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS

Reconciliation has always been a grassroots movement. As an organisation or group working so closely with communities, you have an enormous role to play in taking strides towards reconciliation and increasing grassroots support for Treaty.

Community organisations are diverse and it is likely each group will have a different role to play in the Treaty process. You may deliver services which means it is important that your organisation is culturally safe for First Peoples. You may be an activist group which means you should strive to include the perspectives of First Peoples in all your work.

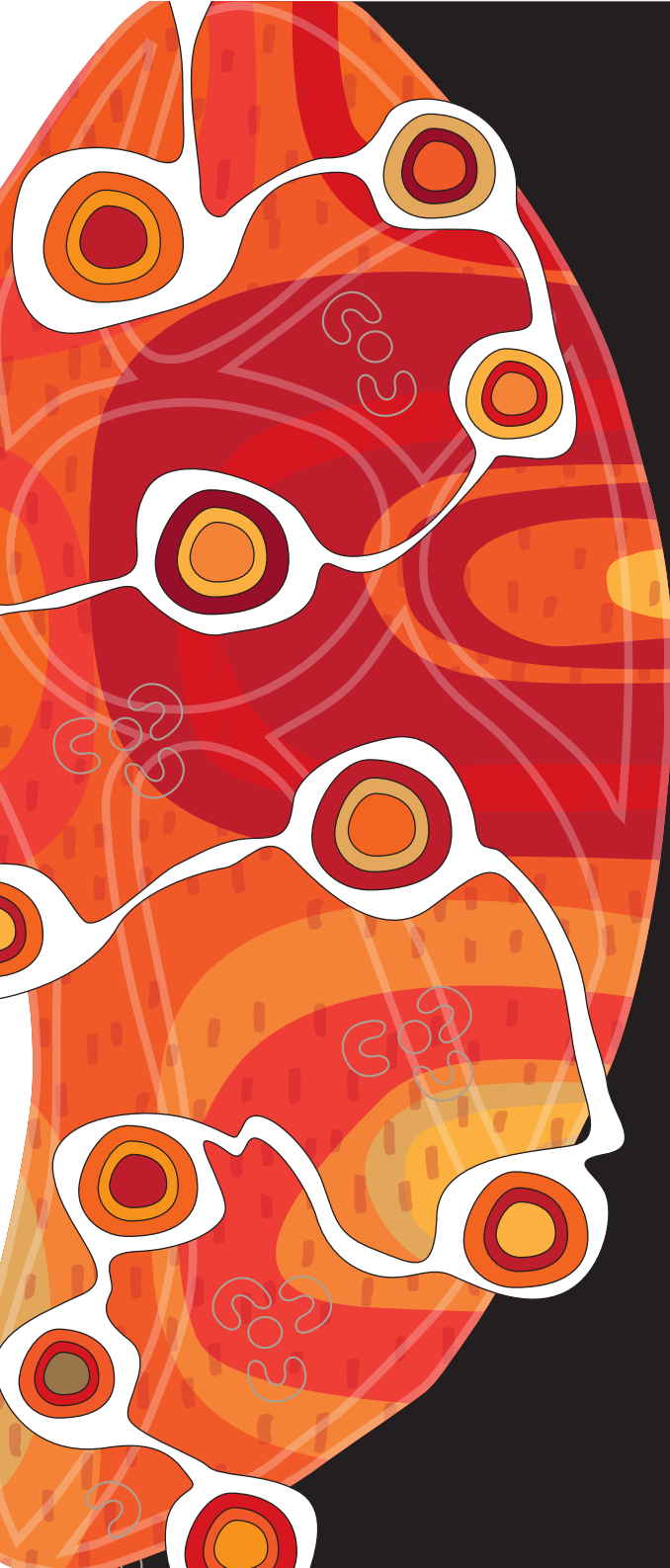
It is important to remember that this stage of the Treaty process is bla(c)k business and the best role you can currently play is to increase community support for Treaty.

Reconciliation Victoria has developed a set of resources, each aimed at supporting a different audience to engage with Treaty; educators and educational institutions, community organisations and local government.

These resources are grounded in Reconciliation Victoria's core goals: to support cultural safety, equitable outcomes, a new statewide identity, and to ensure accountability, and address historical injustice.

Each of the following sections contain actions you can implement to strengthen your organisation's relationships with Treaty.





STRENGTHEN YOUR
RELATIONSHIPS WITH
TREATY THROUGH:

CULTURAL SAFETY

EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

A NEW STATEWIDE IDENTITY

ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

ADDRESSING HISTORICAL
INJUSTICE

CULTURAL SAFETY

Making sure your community organisation is culturally safe is an essential part of community engagement and will be particularly important when it is time to talk and promote Treaty.

Community organisations have a large role to play in building cultural competency and zero tolerance for racism across your local area. This is complex work and it can be confronting for many to think about white privilege and power relations.

Simply put, however, Treaty must be supported by the 97% of Victorians who are part of the broader community.

Understanding the contexts, cultures and histories of First Peoples is important for the wider community to understand and support Treaty.

There is nothing to fear from Treaty and everything to be gained. Treaty will provide a crucial foundation of truth-telling, justice, and self-determination, ensuring respectful relationships remain at the heart of the reconciliation journey.





WHAT CAN YOU DO?

PROMOTE positive images and messages about First Peoples, their achievements, aspirations, histories, and valuable contributions to the social fabric of your community.

READ the cultural security report '*From Symbols to Systems*' written by Inner North West Primary Care Partnership.

DEVELOP engagement policies and protocols in partnership with First Peoples' community organisations represented in your local area.

CONSIDER compulsory cultural safety training from a First Peoples' organisation if you have staff or regular volunteers.

EVALUATE membership policies to identify if they are any barriers to First Peoples joining your organisation or group.

ACKNOWLEDGE significant dates such as National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC Week and Sorry Day.

PROMOTE respect and recognition of Traditional Owners through acknowledgement on any buildings your group works in or attends regularly.

INVITE Traditional Owners to attend your events.

ESTABLISH a working relationship with your local Registered Aboriginal Party (if possible).

FORMALISE your organisation's relationship with Traditional Owners through an agreement, Memorandum of Understanding, protocol or similar.

UPDATE your website and email signatures to include an Acknowledgement of Country.

SUPPORT First Peoples community access to any facilities, services or programs your organisation is responsible for.

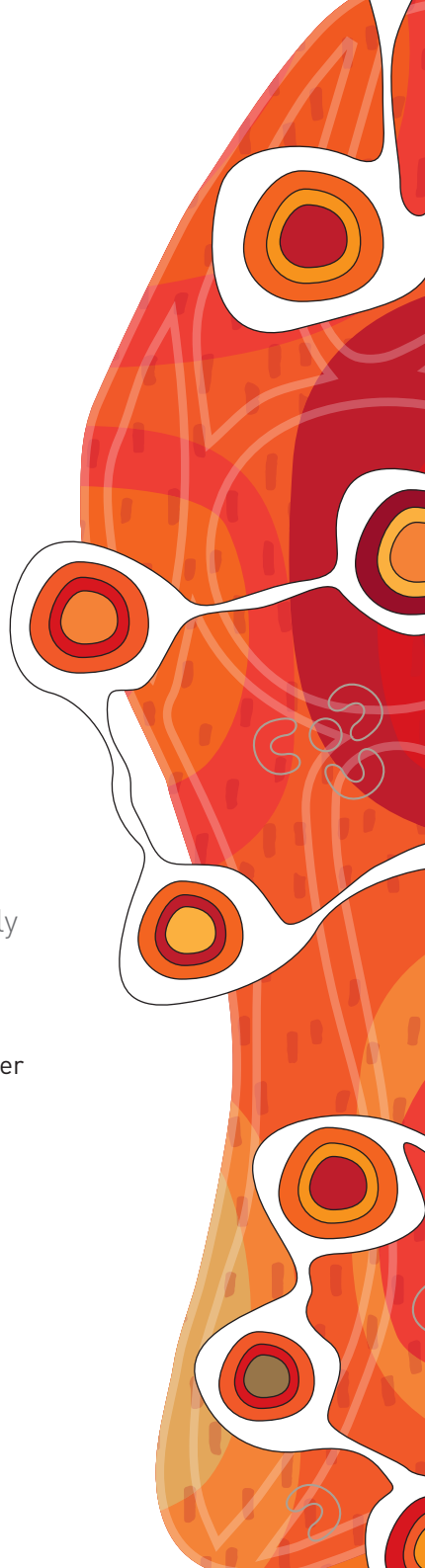
EQUITABLE OUTCOMES

When it comes to Treaty, equitable outcomes are important for two reasons. Firstly, colonisation has led to disastrous outcomes for First Peoples in justice, health, education and employment. Treaty will go a long way toward reaching equity with the broader community.

Secondly, it is crucial that there is a balance of power when negotiations are taking place. It is important that this is a focus if more equitable outcomes are to be achieved both during and after Treaty negotiations.

As organisations who deliver services directly to community, build local networks and organise events, it is important that you begin to act now to ensure everything you do is culturally safe and accessible.

Prioritising more equitable outcomes now will strengthen the Treaty process and lead to better outcomes for all in the future.





WHAT CAN YOU DO?

COMMUNITY health organisations should develop partnerships with local Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations.

UNDERTAKE audits of your services to identify whether there are barriers for First Peoples using these and take steps to make services more inclusive.

ENSURE that First Peoples are represented on any committees and boards in your organisation.

EDITS terms of reference for your committees to specifically mention the importance of First Peoples' representation.

ADD a new Reconciliation Advisory Committee to help guide your future work.

REVIEW any procurement policies you have, or write new ones, that set targets to ensure you are supporting First Peoples-owned businesses in your local area.

INVITE First Peoples-owned businesses to hold a stall at any community events you organise.

HOLD a fundraising event that contributes to local First Peoples' foundations.

ENSURE any Aged Care services you are involved in deliver care in a culturally appropriate way so Elders are supported and protected.

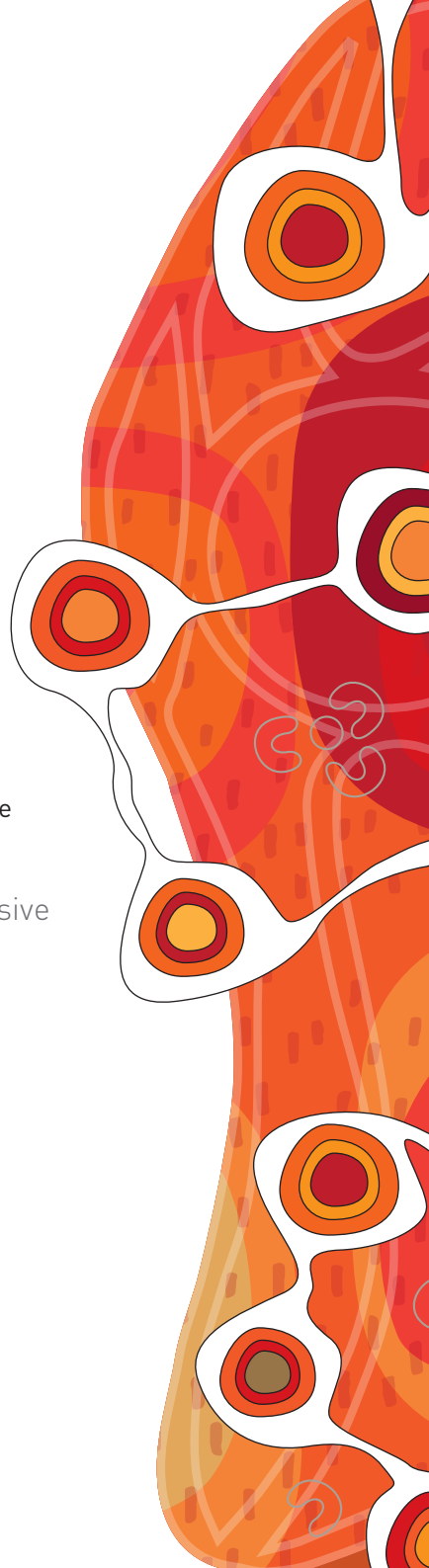
A NEW STATEWIDE IDENTITY

Treaty will recognise the sovereignty of First Peoples in Victoria and will value of self-determination. Treaty, alongside the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission, will tell the true history of the colonisation of Victoria.

Understanding our history is essential if we want to understand our future. Treaty is a way for First Peoples and the wider community to acknowledge the past while also creating a new and shared statewide identity broader community.

As groups that support and promote local histories, stories and voices, you have the responsibility to showcase the deep and rich First Peoples histories and cultures that shape and contribute to each community.

Taking steps towards building an inclusive identity that celebrates First Peoples will strengthen your neighbourhoods and communities.





WHAT CAN YOU DO?

ENSURING the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Flags are being flown at any buildings you regularly attend is one of the most widespread and fundamental ways to recognise and respect First Peoples.

If you are responsible for **FLAGS**, develop local protocols with Traditional Owners including lowering them to half-mast on the passing of an Elder or on Sorry Day.

WORK with local Traditional Owners to develop protocols for Acknowledgement of Country and Welcome to Country.

SUPPORT and commission art by First Peoples for spaces you work in or for the design of any publications you produce.

COMMISSION performances by First Peoples in festivals and events you run such as music, dance, comedy and theatre.

CURATE art exhibitions by First Peoples in local art galleries.

Pass motions at **MEETINGS** within your organisation which support the aspirations of Treaty.

CONSULT with local First Peoples' communities about January 26th and consider what activities you may run on that day.

PROVIDE alternate, culturally safe events on January 26th for First Peoples' community to attend.

FACILITATE truth-telling by making your records and any existing local histories available to First Peoples.

WORK with Traditional Owners to provide appropriate signage and interpretation for the general community to recognise the continuing connection of First Peoples to place.

COMMEMORATE National Reconciliation Week, NAIDOC, and other significant dates.

ALWAYS remunerate First Peoples for their time and knowledge.

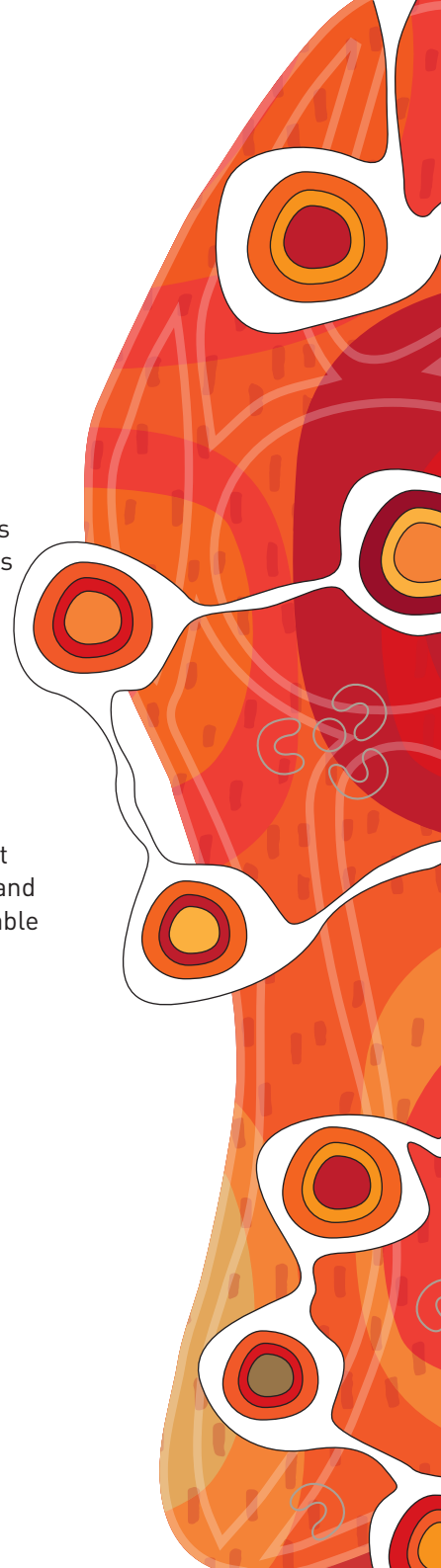
ENSURING ACCOUNTABILITY

In preparing your local community for Treaty, the key element is that all work must be guided by the voices of First Peoples.

The aims and outcomes of your work need to be transparent, and groups and organisations need to be accountable to local First Peoples for the commitments you make.

There are a number of ways that community organisations can ensure appropriate accountability frameworks are in place. These can be implemented depending on your resources and the needs of your local First Peoples' community.

An important part of this is first ensuring that your organisation or group is culturally safe and local First Peoples' community feel comfortable sharing their truths with you.





WHAT CAN YOU DO?

In **CONSULTATION** with local First Peoples' community, consider developing a strategy such as a Reconciliation Action Plan.

DEVELOP strong and truthful relationships with other community organisations involved in reconciliation like Local Reconciliation Groups.

CREATE a key stakeholder list and regularly check in and gain feedback.

INVESTIGATE local opportunities to nominate your organisation or group for an Award to acknowledge your reconciliation work.

Regularly **CHECK-IN** with First Peoples who are members of your organisation, while also being aware of cultural loading.

DEVELOP a culturally safe feedback system for First Peoples staff, volunteers and members.

PARTICIPATE in existing or create new regional networks focused on key areas of concern for First Peoples in Victoria.

DEVELOP protocols that cover relationships with Traditional Owners that include creating space for truth-telling.

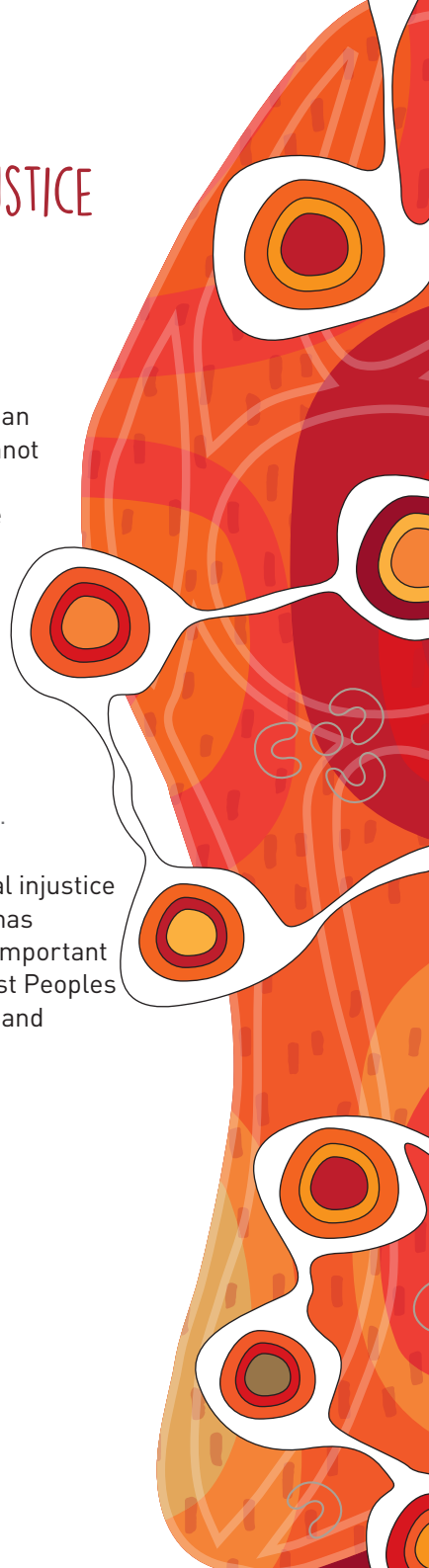
WORK with First Peoples-owned businesses to audit and evaluate your programs.

ADDRESSING HISTORICAL INJUSTICE

Community organisations play an important role in promoting and celebrating local histories. First Peoples' histories add an important dimension to these activities and is an important step towards reconciliation. We cannot continue to ignore past and ongoing injustices to First Peoples. If we are to move forward we must actively address historical injustice.

Truth-telling is a central part of the Victorian Treaty process and the upcoming work of the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission. It is a core element of the Uluru Statement from the Heart's call for Voice, Treaty, Truth.

This is not to say that addressing this historical injustice is solely about the tragedies that colonialism has caused for First Peoples in Victoria. It is also important to recognise the significant role that many First Peoples have played in the development of local areas and contributions to the broader culture.





WHAT CAN YOU DO?

WORK with the local First Peoples' community to research, document and promote First Peoples' histories.

RENAME any buildings you work in containing racist names with traditional language names, seeking appropriate permissions.

CONDUCT an audit of any memorials or plaques your group is responsible for.

LOBBY local governments to rename buildings and geographic features with traditional language names.

ACKNOWLEDGE and promote the work of local First Peoples who have contributed to your local community through any notice boards or newsletters you manage.

RAISE awareness of the diversity of First Peoples' languages by promoting the Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages' Victorian language map.

If you are **ENGAGED** in environmental work, always consider First Peoples' perspectives on sustainability and caring for Country.

WORK with Traditional Owners and local First Peoples' communities to identify opportunities in which traditional language can be recognised locally.

ENSURE guidelines, including consultation with First Peoples' communities, are followed for formally naming geographic features with traditional language names.

WORK with local Traditional Owners to build greater community awareness about First Peoples' cultural heritage.

DEVELOP cultural heritage trails, facilitating education opportunities and conducting community awareness weeks.

COMMISSION truthful community narratives of local histories.

RESOURCES

Reconciliation Victoria

reconciliationvic.org.au

Maggolee

maggolee.org.au

First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria

firstpeoplesvic.org

Yoo-rrook Justice Commission

yoorrook.com.au

Victorian Aboriginal Heritage Council

aboriginalheritagecouncil.vic.gov.au

Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation

vaccho.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Corporation for Languages

vacl.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc.

vaeai.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service

vals.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Health Service

vahs.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd

vacsal.org.au

Victorian Aboriginal Child Care Agency

vacca.org

Melbourne Aboriginal Youth Sport and Recreation

whitelion.asn.au/maysar

Koorie Youth Council

koorieyouthcouncil.org.au

Aboriginal Housing Victoria

ahvic.org.au

Aboriginal Community Elders Services Inc.

acesinc.org.au

Aborigines Advancement League

aal.org.au

Reconciliation Australia

reconciliation.org.au

Reconciliation Victoria works with an independent network of Local Reconciliation Groups, who promote cultural awareness, understanding and education in their local communities.

If you are interested in contacting or joining a Local Reconciliation Group visit: <http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au/act/local-reconciliation-groups>

