



Morwell community gathering, 29 August 2018

VICTORIAN TREATY ADVANCEMENT COMMISSION

Quarterly report July to September 2018

This quarter saw an intense focus on engaging with community on the treaty process and the design of the Aboriginal Representative Body. The Commission's roadshow was completed with legs in Loddon Hume and Gippsland, as well as a series of events across Melbourne.

The Commission spoke with over 580 people across these legs including dedicated meetings with Elder's groups in Loddon and Gippsland. The roadshow has been invaluable in talking with community about the treaty process and their aspirations for treaties.

The Commission is undertaking extensive policy work developing a representative body that must best reflect the diversity and strength of the Victorian Aboriginal community. In September 2018 the proposed model was released for community feedback throughout the following month.

Across 24-25 September 2018 the Commission was proud to host an Elders' Forum and Statewide Gathering. This was an opportunity to bring community together to celebrate all that they have achieved, talk about the next stages of the process and receive feedback on the

proposed model. Included below are the reports from both of these events capturing what was discussed on the day, the feedback the Commission received, some of community's aspirations for treaty and the Commission's next steps in establishing the representative body.

Incorporating the voice of Elders into the representative body is critical to the Commission's work. At the Elders Forum the Commissioner committed to meet with Elders groups across the state to seek their views on the design of this voice. These consultations will commence in early 2019 allowing Elders to be at the heart of designing their voice on the body.

The Commission's work continues to be guided by the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group and they have met with the Commission three times in this period. The Commission continue to meet with stakeholders within government and groups across the broader community to build support and maintain the momentum of the treaty process.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE COMMISSION

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JillGallagherAO



Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission



REPORT

Statewide Gathering and Feedback Report

December 2018



Victorian Treaty
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Image: Djirri Djirri Dance Group

Purpose

This report outlines what community members have told the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission (Commission), in response to the proposed Aboriginal Representative Body model (Representative Body).

It also sets out areas the Commission is working on, ahead of the establishment of the Aboriginal Representative Body.

The Representative Body will be the key voice for Aboriginal people through the treaties process. It is not being established to negotiate treaties – rather, it will help create the framework for negotiations to occur.

A circular graphic with a textured orange background. Inside the circle, the text reads: "More than 400 Aboriginal Victorians attended the Statewide Gathering". The number "400" is significantly larger than the other text.

Statewide Gathering

.....
About 700 community members took part in the Statewide Gathering on 25 September 2018.

More than 400 Aboriginal Victorians attended, and almost 300 people across Victoria watched a live stream online.

The gathering was a chance for people to discuss and question the proposed Representative Body model, in particular the structure, representation and inclusive aspects involved.

It was also a reflection of the Commission’s Community Gatherings in 30 local communities across Victoria, held between April and September.

Feedback process

Feedback on the proposed model was open from 25 September to 30 October 2018.

Submissions were received via the Commission's website, phone, email, SMS and through conversations with community members.

The Commission continues to hear feedback as we meet with communities across the state.

The Commission received more than 40 written submissions, in addition to more than 70 text messages and hundreds of comments written by attendees at the Elders' Forum and Statewide Gathering.

Key feedback themes

1. Continue to **build on momentum** – get on with it!
2. The importance of the **voices of Elders**
3. Encouragement for **youth participation**
4. The need for **inclusivity**, and to represent everyone in the community
5. How **communities living interstate** will be able to participate - including those living on Victoria's borders
6. The need for continued **engagement** with community, and ongoing dialogue
7. Support for inclusion of members of the **Stolen Generations** and those that are still **regaining their connections** to family and community
8. The need to reinforce **strong governance** of formally recognised traditional owner groups
9. The need for the Aboriginal Representative Body to be **properly resourced** and **accountable** to the community
10. Support for Representative Body candidates to run for elections on an **even playing field**
11. Detail on **where people will be able to vote**
12. The need to infuse the Representative Body with **culture** and traditional ways of doing business
13. **Flexibility** for the operating model to adjust over time

Common questions and answers are available via the Commission's website.

We are working on 3 key areas

The Commission is considering and analysing what the community is telling us. We know it's important to get this right.

Voting options for Victorian traditional owners living interstate

Some community members are telling us that it's important for people with connections to Country in Victoria to be able to participate in elections to the Representative Body.

This includes people whose Country extends beyond Victoria's borders.

Setting the most suitable voting regions

The Commission is considering whether we can improve the voting regions we proposed.

Support for traditional owner groups to be eligible for a reserved seat

Some community members discussed alternative ways for traditional owner groups to be eligible for a reserved seat, while also respecting existing recognition that has taken decades to achieve.

The Commission is continuing conversations with the community - including key groups - on these and other issues that have been raised.

As these questions are answered, we'll communicate these back to the community.

What happens next

The Commission is considering community feedback, in order to make the Representative Body as strong as it can be.

We'll release detailed responses to what's been raised.

At the start of 2019 we will be meeting with Elders across the state to get their views on the design of the Elders' Voice.

We'll talk to people in prisons early in the year.

We will look at beginning voter enrolment in the first half of 2019, with elections mid-year.

You'll hear a lot more from us from the start of 2019.

Aspirations for treaties

At the Gathering, and at other meetings, the Commission asked community about their aspirations for treaty.

Some of what we've heard has included:

- Truth telling
- Recognition of sovereignty
- Control over land and services, including options for land buy backs
- Taxation that recognises the unique position of Aboriginal Victorians
- Ensuring Aboriginal history is taught in schools
- Support to trace and reconnect families
- Encouraging pride and dignity of Aboriginal people, and
- Recognition for members of the Stolen Generations

Economic sustainability was a key priority for treaty discussions, including:

- Access to economic opportunities
- Sustainable funding that benefits all Aboriginal people across Victoria, and
- Reparations for past wrongs

Across all our conversations, the Commission has heard the process has to have accountability and enforceability, to ensure fairness and to make sure all parties act in good faith.



Victorian Treaty
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Stay in touch

The Commission is always keen to hear from the community. Your voices and passion are critical to make the treaties process as strong as can be.

You can get in contact via:

E: enquiries@victreatyadvancement.org.au

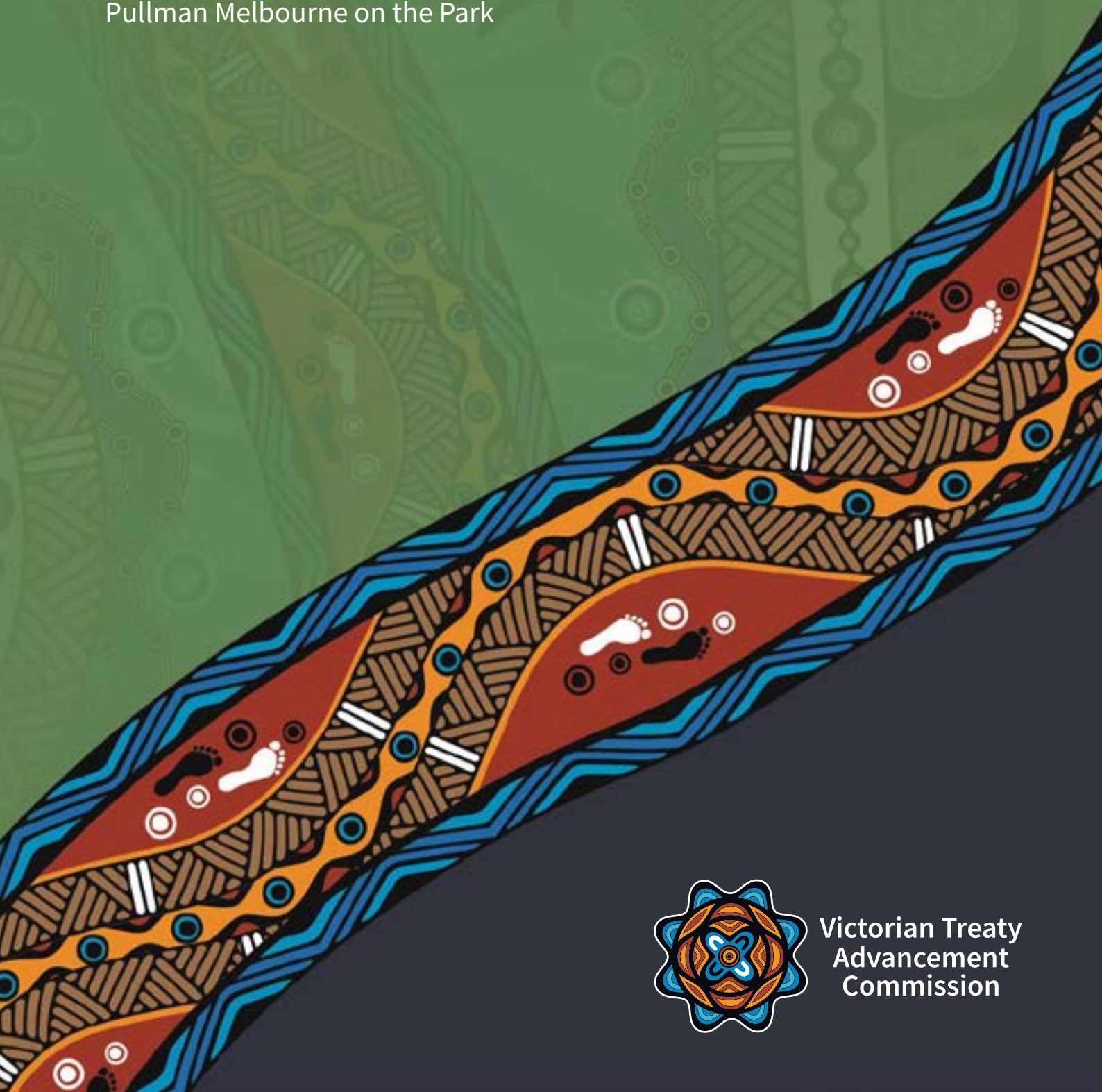
T: 1800 TREATY (1800 873 289)

www.victreatyadvancement.org.au

REPORT

Treaty Elders' Forum

Monday 24 September 2018
Pullman Melbourne on the Park



Victorian Treaty
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Context

The Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission invited Elders from across the state to a historic Treaty Elders’ Forum at Pullman Melbourne on the Park on Monday 24 September 2018.

The forum provided an update on the treaty process and continued discussions on how to incorporate an Elders’ voice, or structure, within the future Aboriginal Representative Body.

This report reflects the discussions the Commission had with Elders, the outcomes of the day and the next steps towards the creation of an Elders’ voice.



Discussion

The role of Elders

The forum heard many perspectives about the role of Elders. Those present discussed the central role of Elders within Aboriginal communities in Victoria. These valuable insights will inform the structure of an Elders’ voice.

The Commission heard from Elders that their key roles include:

Maintaining connection to Country, the nation, language, and their descendants

Asserting and upholding Aboriginal people’s rights to their land, water and sacred sites

Practising and passing on customs, traditions, stories and cultural medicines and foods

Holding cultural knowledge and lore.

The Commission heard detailed discussion of these roles from Elders and how these roles include:

- Keeping families together
- Being role models and leaders
- Being strong anchor points for family connections
- Standing forthright, teaching, passing on knowledge and encouraging and supporting family
- Mediating and developing partnerships
- Communicating through generations
- Promoting the importance of remembering ancestors through sharing stories
- Building up the youth so they understand who they are.



Elders lead by example, by being role models, and upholding cultural lore.”

– Quote from the day



image: Elders' Forum, Pullman Melbourne on the Park

Process

Elders at the forum discussed how the knowledge and skills of Elders could best be utilised to ensure the cultural integrity of the future Aboriginal Representative Body.

The Commission heard from Elders that the following steps should be taken:

- Allocate resources to build capacity for Elders at a local level
- Find ways to engage Elders who cannot come to meetings
- Create ways to support as many Elders' voices being heard as possible
- Make sure that mob who are in prison have a voice.

.....
The Commission heard that Elders can provide strong and transparent cultural oversight to ensure the cultural integrity of the Aboriginal Representative Body.

The Commission heard perspectives on how an Elders' voice could or should be set up:

An Elders voice should be set up in a way that's respectful of different ways of organising

.....
 An Elders' voice would require an appropriate dispute resolution process to be established

.....
 The importance of men's and women's business being done separately

.....
 An Elders' voice should give opportunities for Elders to impart knowledge to youth

.....
 Community need to go back to nations and speak to Elders about an Elders' voice.



We need a committee of some kind – the sooner the better, so we can get back to the old ways of doing business.”

– Quote from the day



image: Aunty Joy Murphy Wurundjeri Elder

Outcomes

The Commission heard from Elders that it is crucial that an Elders’ voice is embedded in the future Aboriginal Representative Body.

This will enable Elders to take their rightful place in the treaty process. Elders’ wisdom can then be mobilised to empower all Aboriginal communities across Victoria.

Although the Commission heard the eagerness to get the process moving forward, Elders also made it clear that more discussions and conversations need to happen.

Elders requested that information be distributed to community about an Elders’ voice. It was noted that this was an important priority, as it respects how community does its business and will keep community engaged in the treaty process.

What comes next

The Commission has heard and listened to the views of all Elders at the forum. We have committed to further conversations with Elders across Victoria.

This will be the critical next step in creating an Elders’ voice for the Aboriginal Representative Body.

There are many design questions relating to the structure of an Elders’ voice that the Commission will be seeking guidance from Elders on. These include the membership, size and decision making powers.

The Commission would like to thank all Elders for the contribution they made to the forum.



Elders are our story-tellers. They nurture us. They are the living link to the past.”

– Quote from the day



Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission

Keep in touch

The Commission wants Elders and community members to get in contact, and share their thoughts about the creation of an Elders’ voice within the Aboriginal Representative Body.

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