



Victoria Treaty

Statement of Support

**LIFE
WITHOUT
BARRIERS**

Artist credit: 'Empowered Voices' cultural artwork created by Keisha Leon, Lisa Sorbie Martin and Gilimbaa.

Victoria Treaty – Statement of Support

Life Without Barriers supports the advancement of the Treaty process for Victorian Aboriginal communities. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners and Custodians of this country and accordingly we recognise their right to self-determination.

Treaty-making is a key aspiration of First Peoples across the world, and in Australia this has not yet been achieved. There are discussions around Treaty underway in several other states and territories, such as in the Northern Territory, Queensland, and Western Australia, instead of at a federal level. It is anticipated that the activities in Victoria will be a template for Treaty negotiations around the country.

Treaties are necessary to recognise historic wrongs and to promote fundamental human rights. They are formal instruments reached through a process of respectful negotiations in which both sides accept a series of responsibilities. They will, at a minimum, recognise or establish structures of culturally appropriate governance and a means of decision-making and control.

Through the process, it will be important to have a clear sense of what a Treaty might mean as well as a broad consensus on a negotiating position.

Aboriginal people in Victoria and the State Government are working towards Treaty negotiations. They will do this through the recently established First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria.

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (Assembly) will be the voice of Aboriginal people in Victoria in the future treaty process and will be independent of government. The Assembly is made up of 32 seats, 21 by the vote of Aboriginal people and 10 representatives were appointed to reserved seats by formally recognised Traditional Owner groups.

The Assembly is led by a nine-person Board elected by the members including two Chairs. The Assembly will establish an Elders' Voice to provide cultural strength and advice to the Assembly.

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria will not negotiate a treaty. Instead, it will now work with the State of Victoria to prepare for treaty negotiations. This includes:

A Treaty Authority – an 'independent umpire' in the negotiation process;

A negotiation framework – this will set out 'ground rules' for example, what is on and off the negotiating table, and who can negotiate; and

A self-determination fund – this will support Aboriginal communities to be on an even playing field with government when Treaties are being negotiated.

Life Without Barriers has a proud history committed to Reconciliation and improving outcomes and opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. We walk together to amplify the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through the way we work and the services we provide, supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples control over the decisions affecting their children, families, and communities.

For more information, including the list of who was elected onto the Assembly please visit

<https://www.firstpeoplesvic.org/> and for other frequently asked questions visit “you ask, Aboriginal Victorians answer” <https://deadlyquestions.vic.gov.au/>

