



Launch of the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission on 7 March 2018

## Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission

### Quarterly report – January to March 2018

#### Progress towards a Representative Body

##### Launch of the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission and final report on the design of the Aboriginal Representative Body

On 7 March 2018 community members joined the Commissioner, Aboriginal Treaty Working Group, Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Hon Natalie Hutchins MP, and other politicians in Parliament House to mark the launch of the Commission and the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group's *Final report on the design of the Aboriginal Representative Body*.

The Report is the culmination of two years of engagement and consultation with community, guided by the Working Group. This includes the Community Assembly held late last year.

The Report sets out recommendations for the design of the Aboriginal Representative Body and will form the backbone of the Commission's work.

The Working Group also presented the Commissioner with the treaty message stick. The stick has been passed from the Working Group to the Community Assembly and now onto the Commissioner. It is inscribed with the names of all

former and current members of the Working Group and members of the Community Assembly.

##### Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Bill 2018

On 28 March 2018 the Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Bill 2018 was introduced into Parliament. This is the first legislation in any jurisdiction in Australia that recognises the need for treaty. If passed, it will commit the government to advancing treaty with Aboriginal Victorians and enshrine the process, including recognition of the future Aboriginal Representative Body, into law. The Bill does not set out what might be in a treaty nor who can negotiate treaty, this is the role of the Aboriginal Representative Body.

The Commissioner and five members of the Working Group were invited onto the floor of Parliament for the introduction of the Bill. The Commissioner and Working Group Chair Mick Harding each addressed Parliament about the historic significance of this legislation.

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#### Keep in touch with the Commission

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## **Developing the electoral system**

The Working Group has referred several key questions to the Commissioner to consider in establishing the Aboriginal Representative Body. These include a minimum voting age for the body, establishing appropriate electoral boundaries, and incorporating the knowledge of elders and cultural governance into the body. The Commission has commenced work on several of these projects.

## **Engagement with community**

### **Hitting the road**

The Commission is speaking with as many members of community as possible. From April the Commission has commenced a roadshow across the state, with the first leg visiting south west Victoria including stops in Geelong, Colac, Framlingham, Warrnambool, Heywood and Hamilton.

On this roadshow the Commissioner and her team will share information about the work of the Commission and the future Aboriginal Representative Body, as well as talking with community about their views on the process and aspirations for future treaties.

Find out when the Commissioner is coming near you by following the Commission on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#), and [joining their mailing list](#).

### **Engaging with Traditional Owners**

Traditional Owners have and will always be at the heart of the treaty process. Throughout the roadshow, the Commission's priority is to reach out to as many traditional owners, family groups and clans as possible.

The Commission is also working with Traditional Owner corporations and peak groups to develop a strategy for targeted engagement with traditional owners throughout the state.

## **Advice to government and community**

### **Undertaking research to strengthen the Aboriginal Representative Body**

While the Commissioner's primary role is to establish the Aboriginal Representative Body, the Commissioner is also responsible for providing advice to government and community.

This work has begun through conversations with community about their aspirations for treaty. It is not the Commissioner's role to negotiate treaty, however this knowledge will be handed over to the Aboriginal Representative Body to inform their direction and enable them to maintain the momentum of the treaty process.

Over the coming months the Commission is also looking at developing research and a knowledge base of the experience of treaty processes and other settlements in Australia and overseas.

### **Meeting with government and stakeholders**

The Commissioner and staff continue to meet with stakeholders in government and community to share information on the Commission, and seek their views on the process.

In this reporting period, engagement has included attending the Northern Land Council's Native Title Conference, the 50<sup>th</sup> Aboriginal Justice Forum and meeting with the Judicial College of Victoria. The Commissioner has met with a range of representatives from community organisations, government and Members of Parliament, and spoken with media across the state.

## **Aboriginal Treaty Working Group**

The Aboriginal Treaty Working Group provides guidance and expert advice on the work of the Commission. From January to March 2018 they met with the Commissioner four times.

### **Terms of Reference finalised**

The Working Group has worked with the Commission and Government on a refresh of their Terms of Reference to reflect the Working Group's new role providing expert advice and guidance on the work of the Commission.

### **Developing the Commission's Strategic Plan**

The Commission has been working in partnership with the Working Group on the development of the Commissioner's Strategic Plan. The plan sets out the key objectives and priorities for the Commission's work and is a key governance document for the Commissioner. The plan is expected to be finalised in the coming weeks and will be publicly available once completed.