



Inaugural meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, December 2019

VICTORIAN TREATY ADVANCEMENT COMMISSION

Quarterly report October to December 2019

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY

In-person voting period

The five weeks of elections of the Assembly continued into October including a two-week in-person voting period. During this period eligible voters could cast their votes at polling booths set up across the state. There were 43 polling booths spread across Victoria, 16 booths operating for a fortnight in larger towns (including four in Melbourne) and 15 mobile booths that travelled to smaller locations in order to reach the greatest number of people, and five regional Family Fun Day events were held to bring communities together. To support community members in prisons, six polling booths were stationed in prisons across the state and all other prisons were provided with support to vote by post.

Polling booths supported community members who preferred to vote in person rather than use the online or

postal options. The booths were staffed by professional election staff, including Aboriginal staff at nearly all polling booths. Assembly Election Officers, Commission staff and local partners were on hand to support Community members to learn about the process and, if they chose, to enrol and vote.

Voting closes, Assembly members elected

On Sunday 20 October 2019 voting in the Assembly elections closed. Thousands of Aboriginal Victorians cast their vote for their representatives, some voting for the first time ever. The five-week voting period meant strong enrolment numbers and voting turnout, particularly given voting was voluntary and the historically low levels of enrolment in community. Every region in the state was highly contested and the application of the gender quota was not required due to the number of Aboriginal women standing as candidates and elected in each region. See the full election results on page three.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE COMMISSION

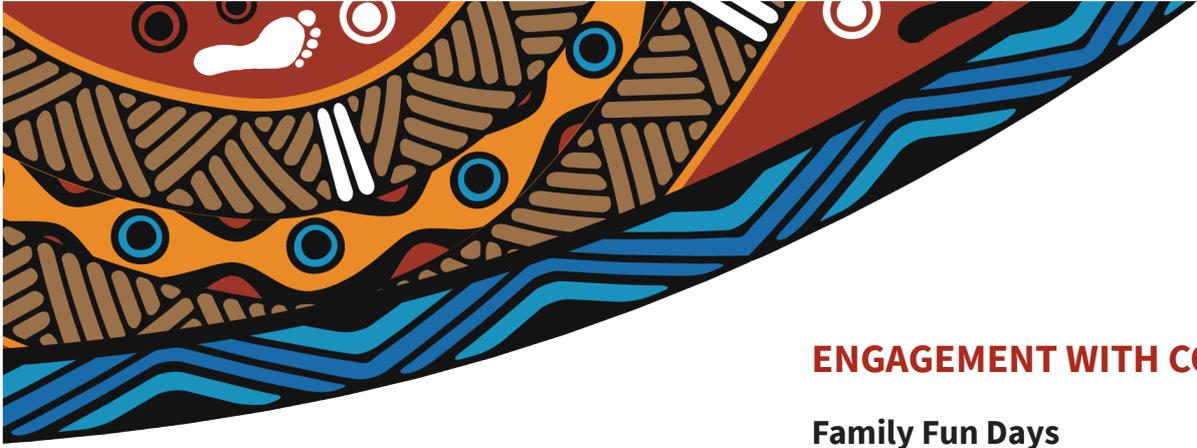
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Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission



Commissioner makes recommendation to the Minister

On 2 December 2019, the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commissioner and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs gave keynote addresses at a National Aboriginal Press Club event at the Richmond Football Club. At the Press Club event, the Commissioner presented a recommendation to the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs that the Assembly be declared as the Aboriginal Representative Body for the purposes of the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018*. The recommendation was accepted by the Minister.

Inaugural meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly

On Tuesday 10 and Wednesday 11 December 2019 the inaugural meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria was held at Parliament House in Melbourne. At the meeting the Assembly Chamber elected 9 members to act as the Assembly's board of directors. The names of the directors are:

- Geraldine Atkinson
- Rueben Berg
- Tracey Evans
- Melissa Jones
- Jamie Lowe
- Troy McDonald
- Ngarra Murray
- Trent Nelson
- Marcus Stewart

From the board, the Chamber elected Geraldine Atkinson and Marcus Stewart as co-Chairs. On the second day of the meeting, the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs and the Premier of Victoria attended and addressed the Assembly.

ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY

Family Fun Days

To support voter turn out, the Commission organised and held Family Fun Days in each of the five voting regions. These special days included entertainment and activities for people for all ages as well as enrolment and polling locations. The purpose of the events was to attract as many potential voters as possible and then use the opportunity to provide education and encourage enrolment and voting. Family Fun Days were held in Shepparton, Bairnsdale, Frankston, Horsham and at the annual VACSAL Carnival in Ballarat. These events provided a significant boost to enrolment and voting numbers and an opportunity for community to gather and celebrate.

Future Dreaming Festival

To cap off the voting period the Commission held the Future Dreaming Festival, at the Coburg Velodrome on Saturday 19 October. This free event included performances from Aboriginal artists such as Electric Fields, The Merindas, Benny Walker and Dallas Woods. The event also featured food trucks, market stalls, kids' activities and enrolment and voting locations. Despite the rain, the event saw a great community turn out and one final opportunity for in-person voting.

Assembly members' preparation and briefing

In preparation for the inaugural meeting of the Assembly, the Commissioner and Commission staff met with each Assembly member to discuss the goals of the Assembly, the Members responsibilities under the Constitution and the agenda for the inaugural meeting. This was also an opportunity for Members to ask the Commissioner any questions they had regarding the functions of the Assembly and how they will be supported in their work. All members were brought together they day before the first meeting to complete their induction and further discuss what members sought to get out of the first meeting.





Election results

On 7 November the Commission announced the results of the election. The elected members are:

Esmerelda Bamblett	Muriel Bamblett
Rueben Berg	Carolyn Briggs
Matthew Burns	Tracey Evans
Trevor Gallagher	Ngarra Murray
Alister Thorpe	Sissy Austin
Michael Bell	Jordan Edwards
Jacinta Chaplin	Raylene Harradine
Jason Kelly	Geraldine Atkinson
Natarsha Bamblett	Leanne Miller
Peter Hood	Alice Pepper
Kaylene Williamson	

On 15 November the Commission announced the names of the members who were appointed by Traditional Owner groups with a reserved seat on the Assembly. The appointed members are:

- Robert Ogden – Bunurong Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Dylan Clarke – Barengi Gadjin Land Council Aboriginal Corporation
- Sean Fagan – Wadawurrung Aboriginal Corporation
- Trent Nelson – Dja Dja Wurrung Clans Aboriginal Corporation
- Jamie Lowe – Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation
- Melissa Jones – First People of the Millewa-Mallee
- Troy McDonald – Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation
- Andrew Gardiner – Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation
- Marcus Stewart - Taungurung Land and Waters Council
- Donna Wright - Gunditj Mirring Traditional Owners Aboriginal Corporation

ADVICE TO GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY

In addition to the in-person polling locations, Family Fun Days, and Future Dreaming Festival, the Commissioner and staff continued a busy schedule of engagements and events with various government and non-government organisations.

In this period the Commissioner delivered speeches at the Western Metro Aboriginal Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drugs Community Forum, IPAA Victoria Public Sector Staff Conference, and the National Aboriginal Press Club.

In this period the Commission also met with the Australian Council of Human Rights Authorities, Committee for Economic Development of Australia, Council of Australian Tribunals and Ballarat and District Aboriginal Co-operative Elders group.

ABORIGINAL TREATY WORKING GROUP

No meetings of the Working Group were held in this period as the final meeting of the Working Group took place in September due to the need to manage conflicts of interest as many Working Group members were either standing for election or closely connected to someone who was.

However, the Co-Chairs and Deputy Chair of the Working Group formed the initial board of the Assembly corporation serving a caretaker role that allowed the corporate structure of the Assembly to be established and operational in time for the first meeting. The Commissioner would like to thank Eleanor Bourke, Vicki Clark and Dan Turnbull for their work as the initial board and their important roles in the inaugural meeting. Working Group members also played a strong role supporting voter turn out and participation during the elections, and were integral to the first day of the Assembly's inaugural meeting.

