



Meet the candidates event - Ballarat, September 2019

VICTORIAN TREATY ADVANCEMENT COMMISSION

Quarterly report July to September 2019

PROGRESS TOWARDS THE REPRESENTATIVE BODY

Candidate nominations close

On 16 August 2019 candidate nominations for the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria closed with more than 70 Victorian Traditional Owners putting their hands up to stand as candidates in the election. This was a fantastic result, reflecting the months of engagement undertaken by the Commissioner, staff and Assembly Election Officers. Candidates were eligible to receive up to \$1,000 in funding to support their campaigning and outreach to voters.

Assembly incorporated, constitution released

On 14 September 2019 the Commission announced that the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria had been incorporated as a company limited by guarantee with the Australian Securities and Investment Commission. Establishing the Assembly as a company limited by

guarantee best ensures the Assembly is independent from government and prevents members from treating the Assembly as a private or for-profit company.

The Commission also published the Assembly's constitution. The constitution governs the operations of the Assembly and reflects the model designed by community over the last three years of consultations. It includes the structure of the Assembly, membership, executive structure and gender balance, and a member's charter setting out members' roles and responsibilities.

Voting begins

On Monday 16 September voting to elect 21 members of the Assembly opened. In the first two weeks eligible Aboriginal Victorians could vote online and by post, and can enrol and vote at the same time. Assembly Election Officers, Commission staff and organisations across the state have partnered to drive voter turn out.

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE COMMISSION

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ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY

National Aborigines and Islanders Day Observance Committee (NAIDOC) weeks

Over the two weeks encompassing both the Victorian NAIDOC week and the national NAIDOC week, the Commissioner and Commission staff maintained a busy events schedule with a presence at the Victorian NAIDOC flag raising ceremony, NAIDOC ball and NAIDOC march. The Commission also attended events at the Ballarat District and Aboriginal Co-operative, Department of Justice and Community Safety, Department of Transport, Victorian Aboriginal Legal Service, Aborigines Advancement League, Nairn Marr Djambana, the Australian Catholic University and the Victorian Aboriginal Education Association to celebrate NAIDOC and encourage people to enrol in the election process.

Meet the candidate events

As part of the Commission's engagement work, a series of 'meet the candidate' events were held in each of the voting regions. The purpose of the events was for candidates to meet with prospective voters in their regions, encourage people to enrol and vote in the treaty process, and let people know why they should be elected as a member of the Assembly. Over twenty events were run over a two-week period in September. Commission staff attended each event to provide support and help attendees to enrol.

Voter enrolment engagement

From the opening of voting, the Commission has worked with community to drive enrolments and votes. Assembly Election Officers and Commission staff across Victoria drove engagement strategies including:

- One on one conversations with community members.
- Working with organisations and stakeholder groups to encourage turn out, including site visits, stalls, events, and drop in sessions.
- Using social media to provide voting and general information.
- Hosting and attending community events to support voting and enrolment.

ADVICE TO GOVERNMENT AND COMMUNITY

This quarter was one of the busiest engagement periods in the Commission's operation. In addition to events attended across the state and national NAIDOC weeks, meet the candidate events and additional Elders consultations, the Commission had a presence at dozens of events to drive enrolment numbers and encourage people to vote.

In addition to these engagements, meetings were held with the Knox City Council, Moreland City Council and Aboriginal Housing Victoria. The Commission continued to engage with government on ensuring measures were in place for the recognition of the Assembly once established.

ABORIGINAL TREATY WORKING GROUP

This period saw the final meeting of the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group take place. At the meeting, the Working Group continued to provide invaluable guidance to the work of the Commission, including on the structure of an Elders' Voice, the election period and interim governance arrangements. Working Group members standing as candidates did not attend the business portion of this meeting to avoid any perception of conflict or advantage.

The Minister for Aboriginal Affairs, Gavin Jennings MLC and the Parliamentary Secretary for Treaty Hon Natalie Hutchins MP attended following the meeting to thank the Working Group for their efforts. The Commission would also like to thank the Working Group members for their dedication, hard work and wisdom over the course of the process to establish the Assembly.

