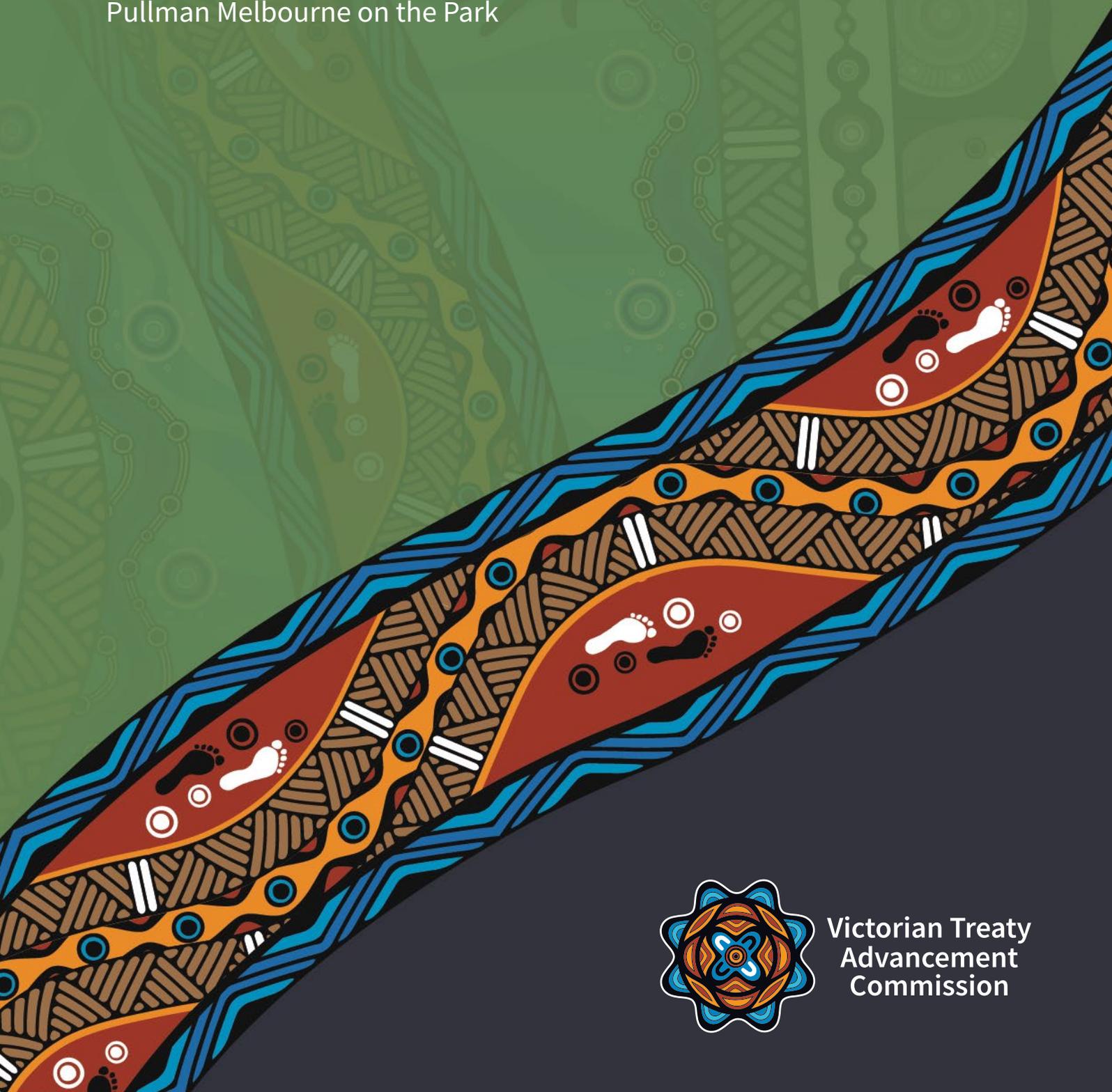


REPORT

# Treaty Elders' Forum

Monday 24 September 2018  
Pullman Melbourne on the Park



Victorian Treaty  
Advancement  
Commission

# 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.

**T:** 1800 TREATY (1800 873 289) **E:** [enquiries@victreatyadvancement.org.au](mailto:enquiries@victreatyadvancement.org.au)

**Post:** Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission, 116 Cardigan Street, Carlton, Victoria 3053

[www.victreatyadvancement.org.au](http://www.victreatyadvancement.org.au)

