

REPORT

Statewide Gathering and Feedback Report

December 2018



Victorian Treaty
Advancement
Commission



Image: Djirri Djirri Dance Group

Purpose

This report outlines what community members have told the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission (Commission), in response to the proposed Aboriginal Representative Body model (Representative Body).

It also sets out areas the Commission is working on, ahead of the establishment of the Aboriginal Representative Body.

The Representative Body will be the key voice for Aboriginal people through the treaties process. It is not being established to negotiate treaties – rather, it will help create the framework for negotiations to occur.

More than
400
 Aboriginal Victorians
 attended the Statewide
 Gathering

Statewide Gathering

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About 700 community members took part in the Statewide Gathering on 25 September 2018.

More than 400 Aboriginal Victorians attended, and almost 300 people across Victoria watched a live stream online.

The gathering was a chance for people to discuss and question the proposed Representative Body model, in particular the structure, representation and inclusive aspects involved.

It was also a reflection of the Commission’s Community Gatherings in 30 local communities across Victoria, held between April and September.

Feedback process

Feedback on the proposed model was open from 25 September to 30 October 2018.

Submissions were received via the Commission’s website, phone, email, SMS and through conversations with community members.

The Commission continues to hear feedback as we meet with communities across the state.

The Commission received more than 40 written submissions, in addition to more than 70 text messages and hundreds of comments written by attendees at the Elders’ Forum and Statewide Gathering.

We are working on 3 key areas

The Commission is considering and analysing what the community is telling us. We know it’s important to get this right.

Voting options for Victorian traditional owners living interstate

Some community members are telling us that it’s important for people with connections to Country in Victoria to be able to participate in elections to the Representative Body.

This includes people whose Country extends beyond Victoria’s borders.

Setting the most suitable voting regions

The Commission is considering whether we can improve the voting regions we proposed.

Support for traditional owner groups to be eligible for a reserved seat

Some community members discussed alternative ways for traditional owner groups to be eligible for a reserved seat, while also respecting existing recognition that has taken decades to achieve.

The Commission is continuing conversations with the community - including key groups - on these and other issues that have been raised.

As these questions are answered, we’ll communicate these back to the community.

Key feedback themes

1. Continue to **build on momentum** – get on with it!
2. The importance of the **voices of Elders**
3. Encouragement for **youth participation**
4. The need for **inclusivity**, and to represent everyone in the community
5. How **communities living interstate** will be able to participate - including those living on Victoria’s borders
6. The need for continued **engagement** with community, and ongoing dialogue
7. Support for inclusion of members of the **Stolen Generations** and those that are still **regaining their connections** to family and community
8. The need to reinforce **strong governance** of formally recognised traditional owner groups
9. The need for the Aboriginal Representative Body to be **properly resourced** and **accountable** to the community
10. Support for Representative Body candidates to run for elections on an **even playing field**
11. Detail on **where people will be able to vote**
12. The need to infuse the Representative Body with **culture** and traditional ways of doing business
13. **Flexibility** for the operating model to adjust over time

Common questions and answers are available via the Commission’s website.

What happens next

The Commission is considering community feedback, in order to make the Representative Body as strong as it can be.

We'll release detailed responses to what's been raised.

At the start of 2019 we will be meeting with Elders across the state to get their views on the design of the Elders' Voice.

We'll talk to people in prisons early in the year.

We will look at beginning voter enrolment in the first half of 2019, with elections mid-year.

You'll hear a lot more from us from the start of 2019.

Aspirations for treaties

At the Gathering, and at other meetings, the Commission asked community about their aspirations for treaty.

Some of what we've heard has included:

- Truth telling
- Recognition of sovereignty
- Control over land and services, including options for land buy backs
- Taxation that recognises the unique position of Aboriginal Victorians
- Ensuring Aboriginal history is taught in schools
- Support to trace and reconnect families
- Encouraging pride and dignity of Aboriginal people, and
- Recognition for members of the Stolen Generations

Economic sustainability was a key priority for treaty discussions, including:

- Access to economic opportunities
- Sustainable funding that benefits all Aboriginal people across Victoria, and
- Reparations for past wrongs

Across all our conversations, the Commission has heard the process has to have accountability and enforceability, to ensure fairness and to make sure all parties act in good faith.



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Stay in touch

The Commission is always keen to hear from the community. Your voices and passion are critical to make the treaties process as strong as can be.

You can get in contact via:

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