

Practical ways Local Councils can increase awareness of Treaty Advancement in Victoria

reconciliation



victoria

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First Peoples have lived in this land for thousands of years and their enduring links to Country have persisted throughout the ongoing impacts of colonisation. In Victoria there are around 40 diverse Language Groups, with unique totems, artistic styles, and creation stories. To learn more about the Country on which you live, work and learn on, visit the Maggolee website at www.maggolee.org.au

Reconciliation Victoria presents this resource to local councils with a range of information to increase understanding of the Victorian Treaty journey.

What is the significance of Treaty?

Treaty can be a cause of confusion for the wider Australian community. What does it mean, and why is it needed?

First Peoples have called for a Treaty in Victoria for a long time. Unlike our neighbouring country of New Zealand, when Australia was colonised a Treaty was not signed between the colonisers and the Traditional Owners of the lands, waters, and seas.

Treaty is an important step towards reconciliation in this country and will significantly benefit all Victorians.



A Treaty will likely result in improvements in cultural rights and recognition, health, education, economic development, and employment outcomes. It is something that will strengthen the whole state of Victoria. Importantly, a Treaty will lay solid foundations on which First Peoples and the wider community can build stronger relationships based on respect and a shared understanding of our history.

Treaty is for all Victorians and will allow us to come together, share, and listen so we can build a deeper understanding and a foundation of mutual respect on the journey towards reconciliation.

Intended outcomes of the Treaty process:

- A state-wide Treaty for Victoria, addressing major issues towards improving education, health, and justice outcomes;
- Potential for specialised Treaties with Victorian Traditional Owner groups reflecting their specific priorities.

Reconciliation Victoria acknowledges the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Victoria, and recognises First Peoples continuing connection to lands, waters, and community.

How has Treaty in Victoria progressed?

In Victoria, the Treaty process has advanced further than anywhere else in Australia. The admirable efforts of Elders fighting for Treaty for many years has led us where we are today.



Aboriginal Treaty Working Group

The Group was established in 2016 when the Victorian Government committed to the Treaty discussion. After consultation with Aboriginal communities, the Group delivered key recommendations for designing an Aboriginal Representative Body to the Victorian Treaty Advancement Commission.

Australia's first Treaty legislation

[Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018](#)

This legislation provided the legal power to establish an independent, elected First Peoples representative body.

The First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria

The Assembly, established in 2019, marked the first official stage of the Treaty process.

The second stage of the Treaty process commenced when the Assembly began formal negotiations with the Victorian Government in 2020.

Together they established three key requirements to support treaty negotiations:

- an independent Treaty Authority, to oversee and facilitate treaty negotiations;
- the Treaty negotiation framework, setting out the rules and process for treaty negotiations;
- a self-determination fund, which will provide Aboriginal Victorians with an independent financial resource and support them to have equal standing with the State in treaty negotiations.

The final stage of the treaty process is currently underway, and the Assembly is diligently working to set up these key foundations.

The next steps include nominating the inaugural Treaty Authority Members, setting up the self-determination fund, and ongoing community consultation for the Treaty Negotiation Framework.

How is Treaty Advancement supported by the VALG?

[The Victorian Aboriginal and Local Government Strategy 2021-2026](#)

(VALG) provides a roadmap to support stronger partnerships between First Peoples and local government, based on mutual control, respect, trust, and decision-making.

The VALG was created to function effectively alongside current initiatives, policies, and laws in Victoria. It is likely to evolve throughout the negotiations and outcomes decided through the Treaty process.

Helping Victorian local government to support self-determination of First Peoples by increasing awareness of Treaty developments

Local government has an important role to play in improving the lives of First Peoples in Victoria. First Peoples self-determination is a key marker in the Treaty process and the VALG provides strategies to assist local councils to support this endeavour through:

- Prioritising culture;
- Addressing trauma and supporting healing;
- Addressing racism and promoting cultural safety;
- Transferring power and resources to community.



What can councils do to inform their staff?

Councils can provide information and further resources to increase awareness of the history, background, and aspirations of Treaty. This will enable their staff to engage and support First Peoples in their communities.

The VALG explains a number of background resources and how they relate to local government. These include:

- [The National Agreement on Closing the Gap](#) – identifying the priority areas local government are responsible for implementing;
- [The Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 \(Vic\)](#) - encouraging agreements between governments and Traditional Owner groups, with engagement strategies for local government such as developing Reconciliation Action Plans, appropriate place naming and flag flying, and cultural awareness and safety.



What can councils do to inform their constituents?

Educate constituents on the Treaty process and the role of local government.

Provide the wider community with opportunities to connect and speak with each other, and to ask questions about Treaty. Encourage and support community engagement with local First Peoples community groups.

Councils can promote positive images and messages about First Peoples, their achievements, Treaty aspirations, histories, and valuable contributions to the social fabric of their community.



Case Studies

What are some examples of how councils are helping to increase awareness of Treaty advancement in Victoria?

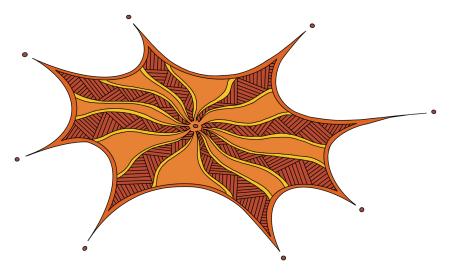
Banyule City Council

Held a Treaty forum for residents to come together and converse about Treaty advancement in Victoria.

Merri-bek City Council

Held a forum of Truth and Treaty yarns with up-to-date information shared by representatives of the First Peoples' Assembly and the Yoorook Justice Commission. During the forum, the public were encouraged to engage and ask questions relevant to their community.

Find out more at maggolee.org.au



Reconciliation Victoria acknowledges the support of the Department of Government Services



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