

Statement

Hon Jacinta Allan MP
Premier



Thursday, 21 November 2024

PREMIER'S SPEECH: COMMENCEMENT OF TREATY NEGOTIATIONS

Today, marks the commencement of Treaty negotiations here in Victoria.

It's an historic day – an enormous step forward.

At the same time, it also marks just another milestone on this journey. A much longer journey: a journey to make our state a better, fairer, kinder and stronger place – for all of us.

That's at the heart of what Treaty is.

Today we'll hear a lot about what Treaty is: what it will mean, what it will achieve.

Today I wanted to begin by talking about what Treaty is not.

And in doing so share with you what I have learnt from Aunty Eleanor Bourke.

As she's said: Treaty is not about blaming or shaming.

It's not about finger pointing. And it's not about pulling us backwards – or apart.

It's about moving us forward, together.

I thank you Aunty Eleanor, for continuing to teach us and guide us through your leadership with the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

Because although we can't erase our history, we can together be the authors of a better future.

Treaty is our chance.

Our once in a generation opportunity to reset that relationship between our State – and those who've called the beautiful lands of Victoria home for tens of thousands of years. Home to the oldest continuous cultures on the planet.

Treaty is our chance to build a stronger Victoria. A Victoria where Aboriginal people have a say over the policies and programs that impact their lives:

Media contact: Zoe McLaughlin 0474 593 035 | zoe.mclaughlin@minstaff.vic.gov.au

Things like their healthcare, family's housing, kids' education, and the practice of their culture.

To me, it just makes sense: when you listen to people, you get better outcomes for people.

That's what Treaty is. A practical way to achieve practical change.

All the evidence – from here and around the world – says that it works.

From literacy to life expectancy. And across almost every measure and metric: Treaty works.

But these are not just some cold statistics, mere numbers in any number of government reports.

Better outcomes mean better lives. Better lives for First Peoples, their families, and their children.

And that can only be a good thing for all of us.

Like any negotiation – I expect there'll be things we agree and at times, things we disagree on.

And that's okay. This is a real, vital negotiation.

We'll be negotiating how to give First Nations people a proper say over their families and communities. And how we can lay the foundations for a better future – for all of us.

It's important that we get this right. And that we take the time to make sure we get it right.

Can I finish by acknowledging the fact that we are only here today because of the leadership of Aboriginal Victorians. I thank you so deeply for that.

I'd like to thank everyone – some for whom it has been a lifetime – for us getting to today.

And I want to thank all those who bravely and selflessly attended hearings, made submissions and gave evidence to the Yoorrook Justice Commission's truth-telling process.

Your words and your experiences, whilst difficult to hear, and I'm sure even harder to recall, will form the very foundation of Treaty going forward.

Now, it's incumbent upon all of us to meet this moment, to seize the historic opportunity before us.

Aboriginal people have come to this process with an open and courageous heart.

And today, I commit to you that we, the Victorian Government, will do the same.

-- Check Against Delivery --