

Joint Statement

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**First Peoples'
Assembly of
Victoria**

Tuesday, 9 March 2021

JOINT STATEMENT ON VICTORIA'S TRUTH AND JUSTICE PROCESS

Today has been owed for 233 years.

233 years of violence, dispossession and deprivation. 233 years of deliberate silence.

Today we commit to telling the truth.

We do so for the kids who never came home – and those who are still finding their way back.

For those who were told they were not allowed to speak their own language, practice their own culture, know their own identity.

For the families who lost loved ones in the massacres.

For those who were made to feel like they didn't belong to their own country. And for those who still feel this way.

Today we commit to telling their truth.

We do so in partnership – a shared commitment between the Victorian Government and the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, the state's first and only democratically-elected body for Aboriginal people.

Named after the Wemba Wemba/Wamba Wamba word for 'truth', the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission will formally begin its work in the coming months.

Held independently from Government, and afforded the full power of a Royal Commission, it will mark the beginning of a conversation long overdue, and a commitment to change.

It will compel us to confront what's come before. To acknowledge that the pain in our past lives on in our present.

And to recognise that without truth, without justice, there can be no Treaty.

Because, 233 years on, Aboriginal Victorians continue to experience outcomes far worse than non-Aboriginal Victorians.

It's why the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission will investigate both historical and ongoing injustices committed against Aboriginal Victorians, across all areas of social, political, cultural and economic life

With the establishment of the Commission, Victoria will be the first and only jurisdiction in our nation to institute a formal truth-telling forum.

We make this point, not out of pride, but with purpose:

As a state, as a nation, we must do better.

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That means not only hearing Aboriginal voices – but actually listening to them. And taking meaningful action in order to achieve real and lasting change.

Victoria's truth-telling Commission will be led by experts and held in partnership with community.

But its work will be for all of us.

Because only by reconciling with our past can we reach for a fairer, more just future – for all Victorians.