

Self-determination as a new policy framework

“ At the moment, our definition of leadership is giving Aboriginal Victorians a seat at our table. But real leadership is about making it their table, too. Our effort must have heart and it must have ears. It must be for Aboriginal people and by Aboriginal people. ”

THE HON DANIEL ANDREWS MP
PREMIER OF VICTORIA
18 MARCH 2015
CLOSING THE GAP EVENT, QUEENS HALL, PARLIAMENT HOUSE

The Victorian Government is committed to advancing self-determination for Aboriginal Victorians.

This fact sheet sets out how the Victorian Government is currently working in partnership with the Aboriginal community to advance self-determination.

A table for and by Aboriginal Victorians

In December 2015 the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs announced a number of new forums to ensure Aboriginal people have a stronger voice at the highest levels of government. These are:

- > a Premier's Gathering with Aboriginal leaders, focusing on high level strategic issues
- > a new Victorian Government Ministerial Forum held with Ministers across government and Aboriginal peak and state-wide service delivery agencies
- > a new Aboriginal Victoria Forum with the Aboriginal community.

Self-determination and Treaty

The Government has commenced conversations with the Aboriginal community to understand what self-determination means for Aboriginal Victorians. This began with an open meeting of the Aboriginal community on 3 February 2016.

At the open meeting the Minister committed to having further conversations with the Aboriginal community about treaty, constitutional recognition and representative structures, initially through forums in regional Victoria.

These initial consultations will culminate in the first Aboriginal Victoria Forum on 26-27 May and will provide an opportunity to pull together all the issues, opportunities and options that have been raised to that point.

Making self-determination core business

The Victorian Government is committed to working closely with the Aboriginal community to tackle some of the most important issues for Aboriginal Victorians:

- > In 2010 the Victorian Government, in close consultation with Victorian Traditional Owners, developed an alternative system of recognising the rights of Traditional Owners. The *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* allows the government and Traditional Owner groups to make agreements that recognise Traditional Owners' relationships to the land, waters and natural resources.
- > The *Aboriginal Heritage Amendment Act 2016* passed the Victorian Parliament on 22 March 2016. The Act was developed after extensive consultation and gives Traditional Owners greater decision-making power to improve Aboriginal cultural heritage management and protection.
- > The Review of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities recommended that a right to self-determination for Aboriginal people be included in the preamble to the Charter, something that Aboriginal people have been calling for.

The Government is expecting to release its response to the Review in the middle of the year.

- > The Government works in close partnership with Aboriginal Victorians in justice, family violence and children in out-of-home care through the Aboriginal Justice Forum, the Indigenous Family Violence Partnership Forum and the Aboriginal Children's Forum (established through the Aboriginal Children's Summit in August 2015).
- > Last year the Government passed legislation that empowers an Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation to assume responsibility for, and make decisions about the care of, Aboriginal children living in out-home care, decisions normally made by the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services.
- > From a single Magistrates' Court site in 2002, there are now 25 Koori Courts across Victoria that provide for Aboriginal communities to have real input into the court processes.
- > The Department of Health and Human Services is currently consulting with the Aboriginal community on a new Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Strategic Plan that integrates self-determination into its core principles.
- > The Victorian Government has also been working in partnership with the Aboriginal community to develop a new Aboriginal education plan.
- > The Victorian Local Aboriginal Networks (LANs) Five Year Plan was released on 17 March 2016 with a plan strengthen the LANs and ensure future success and sustainability of the networks. LANs empower Aboriginal people to lead decision making by providing an inclusive, culturally affirming space in which to participate.