

1. What is the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission?

The Yoo-rrook Justice Commission (Yoo-rrook) is the first formal truth-telling process into historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria since colonisation.

2. Why was Yoo-rrook established?

First Peoples have been calling for a truth and justice process for generations to set the record straight and to acknowledge the devastating past and ongoing impacts of colonisation.

In December 2019, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria (Assembly) was established to advance the treaty process with the Victorian Government (for more about the Assembly see: www.firstpeoplesvic.org).

In June 2020, the Assembly amplified First Peoples calls for a truth and justice process, determining that treaty must be built from a base of truth. In response, the Victorian Government committed to work with the Assembly to establish a truth and justice process.

3. How was Yoo-rrook designed?

The Assembly and the Victorian Government worked together to develop the form and mandate of Yoo-rrook and the selection process for Commissioners. This work was informed by the Assembly's consultations with First Peoples across Victoria.

The Assembly chose the name 'Yoo-rrook Justice Commission'. 'Yoo-rrook' means 'truth' in the Wemba Wemba/Wamba Wamba language, which is spoken in the north-west region of Victoria.

4. Is Yoo-rrook a Royal Commission?

Yes, Yoo-rrook has been established with the full powers of a Royal Commission. This means that Yoo-rrook will be able to compel government and others if necessary to produce documents and official records.

5. Is Yoo-rrook still connected to the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria or the Victorian Government?

No. Now that Yoo-rrook has been set up as a Royal Commission it is independent from both the Assembly and the Victorian Government.

6. What are the aims of Yoo-rrook?

The aims of Yoo-rrook are to:

- Establish an official record of the impact of colonisation on First Peoples in Victoria.
- Develop a shared understanding among all Victorians of the impact of colonisation, as well as the diversity, strength and resilience of First Peoples' cultures.
- Make recommendations for healing, system reform and practical changes to laws, policy and education, as well as to matters to be included in future treaties.

7. What will Yoo-rrook investigate?

Yoo-rrook will look into both past and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria in all areas of life since colonisation. For more detail about what Yoo-rrook will investigate see www.yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au.

8. How will Yoo-rrook conduct its inquiry?

Yoo-rrook will:

- hear stories and gather information from First Peoples in Victoria
- compel, if necessary, the Victorian Government and other institutions to give evidence about current and past practices and policies
- closely examine information that is already available and seek new information as well
- make recommendations for systems change and practical changes to laws, policy and practices.

Yoo-rrook is considering a range of ways in which people can share their stories or provide relevant information. Yoo-rrook will provide support to those seeking to participate. To stay up to date with announcements on the next steps in Yoo-rrook's work, and how you can participate, please subscribe through our website and connect with us on social media.

9. What types of recommendations can Yoo-rrook make?

Yoo-rrook's recommendations can include:

- ways of acknowledging First Peoples' experiences, such as commemorations, exhibitions and access to redress
- ways of improving public education, such as including stories and information about the impact of colonisation on First Peoples in the Victorian school curriculum
- ways of addressing ongoing injustice, such as changes to systems, laws and policies
- that certain matters be part of future treaty negotiations between First Peoples and the government.

10. When will the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission begin hearings?

As an independent body, Yoo-rrook's first step was to recruit staff and plan how it will do its work. Putting in place appropriate processes and support is a priority to ensure Yoo-rrook does not distress people and that information and data Yoo-rrook receives or creates during its inquiry is protected.

Yoo-rrook Commissioners are now meeting with Traditional Owners and First Peoples communities to introduce themselves, raise awareness about Yoo-rrook's aims and to listen to communities' priorities. This feedback will also guide how hearings and other processes are structured.

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11. Will the Victorian government's testimony and hearings be public?

Yoo-rrook has not yet made final decisions how it will run its hearings. However, generally, unless there is a good reason (such as protecting certain types of information), hearings and other information provided will be public.

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12. When will Yoo-rrook deliver its reports?

Yoo-rrook will deliver its interim report in June 2022 and its final report in June 2024.

13. How does Yoo-rrook differ from past inquiries whose recommendations have not been implemented?

Yoo-rrook's mandate is much broader than past inquiries, such as the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Bringing them Home inquiry. It will look into injustices in all areas of life, not just one area, and examine the connections between historical and ongoing experiences. Yoo-rrook will consider relevant reports and recommendations from past inquiries as part of its work.

Governments have a mixed record on implementing recommendations from past inquiries. By contrast Yoo-rrook is a parallel process to First Peoples negotiating treaties with the Victorian government. These treaties can include agreements about implementing Yoo-rrook's recommendations.

14. How much will the Yoo-rrook Justice Commission cost and how will the money be spent?

Yoo-rrook's budget is \$44.4 million from the Victorian Government. This will be spent on support for participants, community engagement and education materials, legal and research assistance and the staff required to deliver Yoo-rrook's objectives

15. How were the five Commissioners chosen?

The Assembly consulted with First Peoples about what qualities they would like to see in the Commissioners of a truth and justice process. The Assembly and the Victorian Government used this feedback to agree upon criteria for selecting Commissioners. The selection criteria required a majority of Commissioners be Aboriginal and at least two be Victorian Traditional Owners. However, there was a range of other criteria developed to ensure Yoo-rrook Commissioners have all the skills to deliver on its very broad mandate.

Applicants applied through an open expression of interest process in March-April 2021. An independent panel assessed applications against the key selection criteria. The Assessment Panel was made up of two people nominated by the Assembly, one person nominated by government and one person from the International Center for Transitional Justice which works with many truth telling bodies around the world). The Assessment Panel invited public comment of shortlisted candidates.

In May 2021 the five Commissioners were formally appointed and Yoo-rrook was established. The Commissioners are:

- Chair, Professor Eleanor Bourke - a Wergaia/Wamba Wamba Elder with decades of leadership in advancing Aboriginal education and cultural heritage.
- Commissioner Dr Wayne Atkinson - a Yorta Yorta/Dja Dja Wurrung Elder and Traditional Owner. An accomplished academic with knowledge and experience in human rights, land justice, cultural heritage and Koori oral history programs.
- Commissioner Sue Anne Hunter - a proud Wurundjeri and Ngurai illum Wurrung woman and a recognised leader in trauma and healing practices.
- Commissioner Distinguished Professor Maggie Walter - a Palawa (Tasmanian Aboriginal) woman descending from the Pairebenne People of the North East Nation. A Distinguished Professor of Sociology and a leading expert in systematic disadvantage and Indigenous Data Sovereignty.
- Commissioner Professor the Honourable Kevin Bell AM QC - Director of the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law in the Faculty of Law at Monash University and a former Justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria.

For the full biography of Yoo-rrook's Commissioners see our website:
www.yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au