

Yoorrook Justice Commission Newsletter

Issue 1, April 2022

Welcome to the first Yoorrook Justice Commission newsletter. Yoorrook will be producing this newsletter quarterly to keep you up to date with what is happening in the first truth-telling process into past and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria. You can also follow Yoorrook on social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#)) or check our [website](#) for ongoing updates.

Yoorrook Launch and Ceremonial Wurrek Tyerrang (Public Hearing)

Yoorrook held its formal launch and ceremonial wurrek tyerrang (public hearing) on 24 March 2022, marking the first public sitting of Australia's only formal truth and justice process.

The historic day commenced at the Stolen Generations Marker in Fitzroy with a smoking ceremony and Welcome to Country, led by Uncle Colin Hunter of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation. This was followed by cultural performances by the Djirri Djirri dancers and ceremonial exchanges between Yoorrook, the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams.



Uncle Colin Hunter welcomes Yoorrook Commissioners, Chairs of the First Peoples' Assembly and the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs to Country at the Stolen Generations Marker



Uncle Colin Hunter performs a smoking ceremony at the Yoorrook launch



Mandy Nicholson and the Djirri Djirri dancers perform at Yoorrook's launch



Yoorrook Chair Eleanor Bourke and First Peoples' Assembly Co-Chair Aunty Geraldine Atkinson with the clap sticks presented by the Assembly to Yoorrook



Yoorrook Chair Eleanor Bourke and Minister for Aboriginal Affairs Gabrielle Williams exchange cultural items

Following the cultural ceremony, Commissioners, representatives of the First Peoples' Assembly and Traditional Owners moved to Charcoal Lane, Fitzroy for the ceremonial Wurrek Tyerrang. The Wurrek Tyerrang began with a minute's silence to recognise all First Peoples who went before and whose advocacy led to the establishment of Yoorrook.



Commissioners observe a minute's silence at the start of the ceremonial wurrek tyerrang

Attendees at the Wurrek Tyerrang then heard opening remarks from Yoorrook Chair Professor Eleanor Bourke, Deputy Chair Sue-Anne Hunter, and Counsels Assisting Tony McAvoy SC and Fiona McLeod AO SC.



Commissioners and Counsel listen to opening remarks from Chair Bourke



Deputy Chair Hunter gives her opening remarks



Counsel Assisting Tony McAvoy SC gives his opening remarks



Counsel Assisting Fiona McLeod AO SC gives her opening remarks

You can watch a recording of the launch and Wurrek Tyerrang at:
<https://webstreaming.lawinorder.com.au/ycr>.

Elders' Yarns

Yoorrook is grounded in and guided by the cultural authority of Elders. Therefore, for the next month, Commissioners will be travelling across Victoria to listen to Elders about which matters they consider most important for Yoorrook's inquiry to focus on.

There are three ways Elders can meet with Commissioners during visits. The first is through the Elders' Yarning Circles, a group meeting with Elders and Commissioners. As a second option, Elders can arrange a one-on-one yarn with Commissioners. Lastly, Elders can join the Commissioners to visit historical or culturally significant sites in their region to meet on Country.

Commissioners have already travelled to Healesville where Dr Lois Peeler and Worawa Aboriginal College welcomed them to Country. Commissioners were fortunate to undertake a walk around the site with Dr Peeler and also spent time paying respects and reflecting at Coranderrk Cemetery.



Commissioners were guided around Worawa by Dr Lois Peeler

Commissioners have also held a yarning circle with Melbourne-based Elders at Charcoal Lane and yarns in Bendigo, Warrnambool, Framlingham and Halls Gap.



Elders, Commissioners, Counsel Assisting and Yoorrook staff enjoy lunch together after the Melbourne yarning circle held at Charcoal Lane

Locations for upcoming Elders' yarns are being announced via Yoorrook's social media channels. If you are an Elder or know an Elder who would like to be involved in these future yarns, please contact Joey Saunders (0459 871 952) or Lisa Thorpe (0467 513 823).

Nuther-Mooyoop (Submissions)

Yoorrook encourages all First Peoples to participate in its inquiry. All ways of telling your truth are of equal importance. All contribute to Yoorrook's work.

Yoorrook will begin by hearing from Elders first. Nuther-mooyoop (submissions) from Elders will open on 26 April 2022 via the Yoorrook website. Yoorrook will invite all other First Peoples to tell their truth in the second half of 2022. The broader Victorian community will also be invited to participate.

Yoorrook will use the information gathered through nuther-mooyoop to tell the story of how colonisation has impacted First Peoples, the strength and resilience of First Peoples, and the survival of cultures, knowledge and traditions. This truth-telling will also help the Commission make recommendations for healing, system reform and practical changes to laws, policy and education.

Nuther-Mooyoop can be in any form, such as writing, an audio or video recording, or through a truth-telling object such as an artwork, cultural artefact, or photo.

You can use nuther-mooyoop to express anything you like about your (or your family and community's) past or current experiences of systemic injustice. You can make your nuther-mooyoop as an individual or as a group.

Yoorrook protects the information rights of First Peoples through our [Indigenous data sovereignty protocols](#). You can choose whether all or only parts of your nuther-mooyoop are used by Yoorrook on its website, in publications, or displayed at events.

You can also choose whether the parts that can be used are used with your name or anonymously. You will be asked to decide how you want your nuther-mooyoop to be treated by Yoorrook as part of the submission process.

Yoorrook's community engagement team can help Elders complete the nuther-mooyoop form. All our community engagement team are trusted community members. For more information and to make an appointment with our community engagement team for assistance making a nuther-mooyoop, contact us on 1800 YOO RRK (1800 966 775) or at enquiries@yoorrook.org.au.

Wurrek Tyerrang (Public Hearings)

An initial group of Elders will also provide their truth at a wurrek tyerrang (public hearings) from 26 April 2022.

Over the next eighteen months, witnesses (individuals and representatives of institutions) will be invited by Yoorrook to appear at wurrek tyerrang based on their direct experiences and perspectives on matters within Yoorrook's Terms of Reference and preparedness and readiness to engage in truth-telling in a public setting. Broad

representation across families, communities, regions, gender and other characteristics will also be taken into account.

Unless subject to any restricted or closed hearing orders, wurrek tyerrang will be livestreamed. For more information about how wurrek tyerrang will be conducted, please see [Practice Direction 1 – wurrek tyerrang](#) on our website.

Keeping Community Safe and Strong

Yoorrook recognises that speaking about your experiences may be daunting or distressing. While some people have strong support networks already, this isn't the case for everyone. Free, confidential and culturally safe support is available to First Peoples who want to tell their truth.

More detail about the support offered through Yoorrook can be found in the [support section](#) of the Yoorrook website.

You can also find out more information about Yoorrook's approach to social and emotional wellbeing through [Information Sheet 6: Social and Emotional Wellbeing Supports](#) and the legal support available through [Lotjpa Independent Legal Service](#) on the Yoorrook website.