

LANGUAGE POLICY

Please note, this is an updated policy. Yoorrook had previously identified a number of Language terms which it used for aspects of its work. Based on external feedback and a review, Yoorrook decided not to continue using these terms. Yoorrook encourages all First Peoples to use any language terms they would like to in their truth telling submissions and in appearances at the Commission.

Yoorrook is the Wemba Wemba word for “truth”. The Yoorrook Justice Commission recognises that the revival and restoration of First Peoples’ languages today is an essential aspect of self-determination. The Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities protects people’s right to enjoy culture and use language and specifically recognises the distinct rights of First Peoples to maintain and use their language.

Additionally, Yoorrook’s work is taking place during the International Decade for Indigenous Languages (2022-2032), which highlights the importance of the right to language as central to identity and culture for Indigenous Peoples everywhere.

The revival and restoration of languages helps to keep First Peoples connected to culture and grounds our identity in who we are as a community. It shows the resilience of First Peoples’ knowledge and contributes to Yoorrook’s goal of creating shared understanding of these issues for the broader public.

Bringing to light the true impact of colonisation on First Peoples culture, including language is part of Yoorrook’s mandate. As is providing “a safe, supportive and culturally appropriate forum for First Peoples to exercise their rights to truth and justice with dignity and demonstrate their cultural resilience by:...acknowledging and respecting differences between First Peoples, for example, through respecting different languages and practices.”

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Yoorrook also welcomes suggestions from Traditional Owners of additional ways in which using and reviving language could contribute to achieving the Commission's goals of truth, understanding and transformation.