



ISSUES PAPER: CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

INTRODUCTION

The Yoorrook Justice Commission (Yoorrook) is investigating systemic injustice experienced by First Peoples in relation to housing and homelessness.

First Peoples in Victoria have extremely poor housing outcomes compared with non-Indigenous people. The startling housing gap between First Peoples in Victoria and non-Indigenous people is part of the enduring legacy of colonisation. European colonisers took First Peoples' lands through state sanctioned policies and laws, violence and other means. The theft of First Peoples land generated massive benefits for settlers, the colonising government and other entities and created enormous wealth that has been passed down across generations. First Peoples have been denied these opportunities.

Homelessness was not a concept known by First Peoples before colonisation. Now, First Peoples in Victoria are 14 times more likely than non-First Peoples to seek homelessness services. First Peoples also continue to face discrimination in the private rental market and are locked out of home ownership and the intergenerational wealth it creates. There are currently more than 5,800 First Peoples on the waiting list for social housing.

Housing is a human right protected by the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Housing is in turn essential to the realisation of other human and cultural rights recognised in international law and the Victorian Charter of Human Rights.

Without a secure home, First Peoples are denied social and economic participation, a decent education, good health, spiritual wellbeing and connection to their country and culture. This is exacerbated for children leaving the out of home care system, Elders, First Peoples with disability, survivors of family violence or other abuse, and people who have had contact with the criminal justice system. These groups face even greater barriers to finding a safe and secure home.

The goals of Yoorrook's inquiry into housing and homelessness are to:

- record past and contemporary housing injustices against First Peoples
- identify the source and breadth of these injustices
- identify the causes and consequences of these injustices
- improve State accountability to prevent continuance or recurrence
- identify ways to achieve housing justice for First Peoples.

Yoorrook is calling for submissions from individuals and organisations to assist this inquiry. Submissions should be made via the Yoorrook website by **8 February 2024**.

ABOUT YOORROOK

Yoorrook is the first formal truth-telling process into historical and ongoing injustice experienced by First Peoples in Victoria since colonisation.



Guided by its values and principles, Yoorrook is:

- establishing an official record of the impact of colonisation on First Peoples in Victoria
- developing a shared understanding among all Victorians of the impact of colonisation, as well as the diversity, strength and resilience of First Peoples' cultures
- recommending immediate legislative and policy changes as well as reforms that may be implemented through the treaty making process.

Yoorrook is independent of government. It has been established as a Royal Commission under the *Inquiries Act 2014*.

Yoorrook's goals are to achieve truth, understanding and transformation in Victoria. [Yoorrook's Letters Patent](#) sets out its mandate in detail. Yoorrook is due to complete its work in June 2025.

Yoorrook was designed and is led and guided by First Peoples.

YOORROOK IS INVESTIGATING SYSTEMIC INJUSTICE IN HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Yoorrook is scheduled to deliver its final reform report in December 2024. In addition to other issues, this report will include evidence, findings, and recommendations about systemic injustice in education, health and in relation to land, sky, waters and resources.

Yoorrook has published separate Issues Papers and call for submissions for Yoorrook's inquiries into land injustice, health, school education and tertiary education, available here: <https://yoorrookjusticecommission.org.au/issues-papers/>.

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS

Yoorrook calls for submissions from individuals and organisations who have experience and expertise in housing and homelessness including:

- First Peoples
- First Peoples Organisations and groups
- current and former staff of organisations and agencies working in housing or homelessness
- advocates and legal representatives
- non-government organisations or entities
- academics and researchers
- government/government agencies.

Submissions responding to this Issues Paper should be made no later than **8 February 2024** to allow time to analyse submissions and to inform hearings and other inquiry processes that

Yoorrook will undertake for its report. Submissions received after this date will continue to inform Yoorrook's ongoing inquiry and official public record.

Yoorrook will publish the submissions it receives on its website with the consent of the person or organisation making the submission. Yoorrook will not make a submission public without the consent of the person or organisation making the submission. Yoorrook will accept anonymous submissions. Yoorrook reserves the right to choose not to publish all or part of a submission if it considers it inappropriate to do so.

THE FOCUS OF YOORROOK'S INQUIRY

Despite the tireless work of many First Peoples individuals and organisations and their historical and continued advocacy, barriers to housing justice remain. Yoorrook acknowledges previous work and will not duplicate the inquiries that have already been undertaken in this area. This includes the work by First Peoples in developing *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort* (Every Aboriginal Person has a Home - The Victorian Aboriginal and Homelessness Framework).

Rather, Yoorrook will build on this work, drawing on its unique perspective as a First Peoples led inquiry. Yoorrook will highlight the experiences of First Peoples in the housing and homelessness systems and identify and build shared understanding around the causes of enduring and systemic injustice for First Peoples. Yoorrook will develop recommendations for change.

Yoorrook wants to hear your experiences and seeks to explore:

- the housing continuum – homelessness to home ownership
- past and present injustices within the housing and homelessness systems
- cultural safety for First Peoples in those systems
- housing in relation to specific needs (Elders, young people, family violence survivors, people with disabilities, out of home care leavers and those existing youth and adult prisons)
- racism in housing, including the private rental market
- barriers to and experiences of social housing
- intergenerational wealth creation and options for First Peoples to enter into home ownership
- changes needed to grow supply, affordability and quality of housing stock across different tenures
- system barriers to Traditional Owners and Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations developing new and innovative ways to deliver housing solutions
- state accountability and system performance, including examples where the State has failed to meet its obligations or implement housing and homelessness related policy and/or recommendations including under *Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort*

- what a self-determined housing system could look like, including governance
- the importance of historical and ongoing advocacy by First Peoples for housing justice.

The issues identified above are intended to guide your submission. You may respond to any or all of these issues or raise others. You may attach relevant submissions or research you have provided to other inquiries or reform processes.

In addition to submissions on these key issues, Yoorrook welcomes:

- case studies demonstrating examples of good practice, innovative approaches or successful models that could be adopted or expanded upon to improve housing experiences of First Peoples
- suggested systemic changes or recommendations needed to remedy housing injustices, ensure State accountability and prevent the continuance or recurrence of housing injustice for First Peoples.

WHAT YOORROOK WILL NOT DO

Yoorrook cannot overturn or change decisions of courts or tribunals or make findings about whether those decisions were correct or not. However, Yoorrook can inquire into First Peoples' experience of these processes and whether they cause or contribute to systemic injustice and may make recommendations for processes or systems changes to ensure this injustice does not continue.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR SUBMISSION

To make your submission please click [here for individuals](#) and [here for organisations, agencies or other entities](#).

Submissions should be made by **8 February 2024**.

For queries about this issues paper or making a submission please contact enquiries@yoorrook.org.au or 1800 YOO RRK (1800 966 775).