

Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission**From: Suzanne Coates, Yorta Yorta, Wemba Wemba****Dated: 4 May 2024****Submission:**

I am a Yorta Yorta Wemba Wemba woman, who grew up off Country, but who have a deep care and love of nature and respect for all our cultures and what this means linked to its spirit and our place in our respective Countries. Country is critical to our health as mob.

My family moved off Country in the 1960s and as a consequence when Yorta Yorta pursued native title a fair bit of lateral violence kicked up. My mum lived on the flats as a kid from time to time with her Aunties and my great grandpa is buried on Cummera.

Our identity as a family is linked to our lands, all the stories of my mum, grandmother and aunties is on Country, but this was denied by Yorta Yorta Nations Aboriginal Corporations former CEO, as has happened to many of us. Double dispossession or maybe triple if you include when they bulldozed the flats when the Queen visited in the 1950s.

Examples of good practice are native food production, social enterprises on Country, the big things happening around Shepp that strengthen all community. Be good to see a welcoming home for all of us though. Not just those lucky to stay on Country. We need to see attitudinal changes and for the Victorian Government employees to see their own laws and frameworks as a priority. The amount of people I've worked with in the VPS who still treat it as 'Aboriginal' lores or cultures makes me so frustrated. I have to keep telling ppl (over 24 years!) that this is YOUR laws and policy that account for OUR rights. Why is this so hard to understand?

END OF SUBMISSION