

**Yoorrook Justice Commission
Statement of Anonymous 910**

I'm a proud Yorta Yorta, Wurundjeri and Gunditjmara man. Over my lifetime I have always been involved, practiced and engaged in my culture. In the last 15 or so years I have been actively exploring and creating traditional weapons and tools of my ancestors and now have items within museums and collections in Victoria.

My practice for creating these items, is to go bush and collect the wood or resources needed. The practice and process of collecting these items is done in a culturally and respectful way and following our cultural protocols for permission to even collect in the first place.

I will speak with Traditional owners if I am seeking a resource from a particular area within the state - once given permission from the Traditional owners, I go and collect the resources and only what they have provided me permission to do so. If it's on my own lands, I collect as I can and when I should.... If this makes sense, never taking too much.

I use an axe or hand saw to collect wood or my hands for mostly everything else. Example – when collecting and cutting out a boomerang, I'll only take one tree root from the tree. Sometimes you can pry the shape out of the tree root, however it's hard to do. I could be seeking kangaroo teeth for necklaces, to collect these roo teeth, I have to drive along the roads and collect from animals which has been killed by motorists.

My concerns are that when I do go to the bush to collect resources, I am worried I will be caught by different authorities and be charged or taken to court. I have heard stories of this happening.

In the Vic human rights charter... I believe it is, under section 19 (b) I think, it indicates that we as Aboriginal people have a right to practice our culture. I have tried so many times contacting the land owners such as parks Vic to get permission, alongside the Traditional Owners' permission to also go and collect resources however there is no process on their websites and when I call these services, the staff pass me around to so many people and I end up talking to a random Aboriginal staff member who can't provide me an answer or approval and/or they take my details and don't return my calls or emails. Ultimately this has been a few years since I have tried that process again, as I just gave up on it. However, I feel like I try and protect myself and my cultural rights and worry I will be taken to court for something that could be so easily fixed.

If there were a recommendation, I could provide the government around this, would be for the Traditional owner groups document my approval, to have the ability to approve and no government can ever pull me up for it or any authority take me to court for this matter.