

Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission**From: Angela Halpin****Dated: 2 November 2024****Submission:****What do you know about the colonisation of Victoria and its impacts on First Peoples?**

I am 66 and I live in the Wombat Forest. Over the last 45 years, I've learned as much as I could from lots of sources. I wanted to make sense of my ex-husbands family journey, I now understand so much more. His parents have indigenous heritage. Gundjitmara friends, and the community in Portland have helped me learn more about Victoria. My mother-in-law had much indigeneous cultural knowledge. I am sad I was not able to ask her the questions I have now. I am reading The Years of Terror - Kulin and Colonists at Port Phillip 1835 - 1851. I understand the Gunugura Balug lived around here in Hepburn but were all murdered slowly by the Protector Parker - Such terrible treatment is Genocide, pure and simple.

What has been your experience learning about First Nations history and culture in Victoria's education system? Do you feel it was comprehensive?

My experience was I landed at Brisbane airport 26 January 1980. So in Queensland, I went looking for what happened to the first people... read heaps of library books... All silent about the real genocide, and full of creative bullshit pioneer histories featuring the 'heroic' invaders, all the while dehumanising the people and the cultures living here.

What changes would you like to see in Victoria to promote better understanding and respect for First People's?

I think you need to watch out for vested interests jumping into the truth telling as spokespeople for First Nations. They are harvesting your story, for their own fundraising. I've stood on Djaara country for 22 years protecting Wombat Forest from VicForests. Eagles nest near my place and I listen to the land everyday. I get lots of dreams about the land. For years, I looked forward to her people back on country... So what happened to me was a shock. A well know environmental group came to my neighbourhood and claimed to be connecting locals to First Peoples. The whole thing had an aggressive vibe, the rage of two centuries injustice directed at local folks who cared enough to show up. I got called a racist... Bizzare. So very unhelpful to unity. I felt insulted and saddened by their simplistic understanding of the bigger picture. Elitists complicating things. Lets change that. Maybe a positive 'working together' model, around shared knowledge and positive inclusion of community. Be so welcome by my neighbourhood. Watch out for the virtue signalling, wanna be middle men, out for their own purposes, that are circling you.

In what ways do you think non-First Nations Victorians can contribute to the process of truth-telling and treaty?

This is about the truth of Australia. Its everyones truth. Truth telling and treaty benefit everyone. So many bits of the puzzle we try to understand. Lots of families have stories.

In what ways could First Peoples history and culture be promoted in Victoria?

Every which way. Oldest living civilisation on earth!!! Amazing. I like to 'focus on the land and the sky'. Love the idea of national parks where the important ideas make sense when you walk it out. Such a healthy outcome. Read the land, listen to the wind and feel the ancestors. Our stories... are so unique yet universal. More music, film, and philosophy. Benefits are that you are giving every Australian a sense of place in this ancient land. I am so proud that we are finally getting the record straight. Thank you for your hard work. So worthwhile !!

END