

**Submission to Yoorrook Justice Commission****From: Eliza Tipping****Dated: 27 October 2024****Submission:**

**\*\*Please note, I mention a name of a First Nations leader that I believe may have died. I wanted to flag this before reading on as I believe that is a consideration for any First Nations individuals reading this submission.\*\***

Firstly thank you for this opportunity. While the focus of Yoorrook must absolutely be on our First Nations people's experience, living here and as the seventh generation Australian of First Nations people's experience, living here and as the seventh generation Australian of 'gold rush' migrants, the into historical and ongoing systemic injustice experienced by First Peoples since colonisation has had a profound impact on me.

The main story I would like to share is the inherent lack of education of our history. I have been more fortunate than most non-indigenous Australians to have opportunities in my degree at La Trobe University to undertake a subject called Aboriginal Australia that was a huge insight into the historical and ongoing systemic injustice for our First Nations people, along with a visit at the time to the powerful permanent exhibit at the Melbourne Museum, Bunjilaka. Additionally, working at the state government department for the environment for 8 years who at the time had a stronger focus and culture than most departments on the realities and truth of our history and systems.

As part of our induction, we had a 2 day, in person cultural awareness training that included Wurundjeri elder, Uncle Bill. I will never forget him taking us down to the Yarra in Abbotsford and hear the stories or the role play our facilitator created, playing out how children were separated in times not so long ago. I will also be forever grateful for the opportunity provided by the department to undertaken Aboriginal Cultural Safety Training at VACCHO in which First Nations facilitators generously answered any questions we had and shared incredibly painful stories and evidence of the apartheid that occurred in this country until as recently as the 1960s from memory.

I will never forget holding that laminated copy of the paper that First Nations community members carried with them for authorities to check if they had 'opted' into accessing the rights and luxuries of the 'white' Australians with the requirement to not participate in their aboriginal culture. These moments have challenged what I thought my free, peaceful country was meant to be or what I was told growing up as a white Australian. It has at times brought me to tears and meant I often carry a 'heavy heart' about this place and what the cost has been for the colonisation of the country. It has impacted my relationships with people in my family and workplaces and community that have not had the education and training I have been fortunate to have as they express racist and mislead opinions about our First Nations communities.

I would also like to share my experience as a grade 3 student in the 1980s at Princes Hill Primary School in inner north Melbourne in which an exchange teacher from Scotland was so horrified that we were not taught about aboriginal history and culture that he 'hijacked' the

curriculum for 2 terms and taught it to us!! It must've been in the SOSE subject (we were still doing other subjects! Just to clarify).

While he would've been absolutely ill-equipped to do so, I will never forget the giant mural that we painted on one side of the class room that was to represent the Australian bush and get into the mindset of how interconnected country and community are! I knew even as a child, that something was being overlooked in our education and again, I have been perhaps one of the lucky recipients of and not-so-common education. To the school's credit, I also will never forget Mark Rose (\*\*I am sorry, I am not aware if he is still alive hence my warning at the opening), the First Nations speaker coming to our school and sitting in a circle to hear his stories and insights in the enormous challenges and painful histories but also the powerful culture and knowledge of our First Nations communities.

To finish, I the worst case of racism and insight into the systemic and horrific racism and need for education and healing in our country was at a barbeque in the N.T. when I spent a few months up there. There was an off-duty police officer that said unrepeatabe things. It was a horrifying moment for me as an Australian to hear that terrifying hate from someone in such a position of power. It was something I had heard existed in our country from my education and interest in our true history, but not something I ever thought I would witness first hand. May we find a way to have a more respectful education system to address our dark history and current racist systems. My heart goes out to the team working on this powerful historical moment. Thank you again for the opportunity

**END**