



Domain 6:
**Culture
& Country**



Our shared commitment is the promotion of the rights and responsibilities under section 19(2) of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities Act 2006: 'Aboriginal persons hold distinct cultural rights and must not be denied the right, with other members of their community –

- a. to enjoy their identity and culture;
- b. to maintain and use their language;
- c. to maintain their kinship ties; and
- d. to maintain their distinctive spiritual, material and economic relationship with the land and waters and other resources with which they have a connection under traditional laws and customs.'⁹



Goal 18: Aboriginal land, water and cultural rights are realised

Objective 18.1 Increase the recognition and enjoyment of Aboriginal land, water and cultural heritage rights

We recognise that Aboriginal Victorians hold distinct cultural rights, including the right to maintain their spiritual, material and economic relationship with their traditional lands and waters. The connection to land, water and resources on Country is important to the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal Victorians, particularly Traditional Owners. Reconnecting Traditional Owners to Country can help revive culture and contribute to an improved sense of identity.¹⁰ We recognise that only Traditional Owners can speak for Country.

The *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* is Australia's first-ever treaty law.¹¹ The Act reflects the intent to help improve the lives of Aboriginal Victorians, and the lives of future generations. The Act also recognises Traditional Owners as key stakeholders in the treaty process, in recognition of their distinct cultural authority as Victoria's First Peoples. As we continue on the path to treaty, it is an opportunity to recognise and celebrate the unique status, rights, cultures and histories of Aboriginal Victorians.

“We are the custodians of this land, so it’s our right to look after Country. Healthy Country, healthy people.”

Online survey respondent

“Government needs to support treaty as negotiated by community, in support of self-determination.”

Community forum participant, Bendigo



Goal 19: Aboriginal culture and language are supported and celebrated

Objective 19.1 Support the preservation, promotion and practice of culture and languages

Past government policies of dispossession and assimilation led to loss of Aboriginal cultural practice and languages. Despite this, the strength and resilience of Aboriginal Victorians has helped to preserve cultural practices and languages, which continue to be practised and passed onto future generations.

Connectedness to culture and community strengthens individual and collective identities, and promotes self-esteem, resilience and improved outcomes for Aboriginal people.⁶ While cultural identity is central to the lives of Aboriginal Victorians, all Victorians should celebrate and take pride in Aboriginal culture and language.

Language reclamation is important. It gives power back to the community and makes it a safe place.

Community forum participant, Ballarat



Goal 20: Racism is eliminated

Objective 20.1 Address and eliminate racism

Racism can have a harmful impact on the cultural identity and confidence of Aboriginal Victorians. Research shows that experiences of racism can also have detrimental long-term health effects, both mentally and physically.⁶

Racism manifests in many forms: stereotyping and name calling, as well as systemically through structures that exclude the participation of Aboriginal Victorians in everyday life. Eliminating racism – in all forms, at all levels – should not be the responsibility of Aboriginal Victorians. It is everyone's duty to work towards a fair and equitable Victoria.

Government needs to educate themselves on why community feel the way they do.

Community forum participant, Swan Hill