

Walking Together: VAADA's Pledge of Support for Treaty

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) is proud to acknowledge First Peoples as the Traditional Owners of the lands where we live and work across Victoria. We pay our respects to Elders, past and present and remember that sovereignty was never ceded.

As an organisation firmly committed to advancing social justice and equality, VAADA wants to play its part in righting the wrongs of the past and be part of creating a better future for all Victorians. We welcome the invitation to take part in creating change. We identify and accept that substance use amongst First Peoples is the direct result of trauma resulting from genocide, including being forced off country and removed from culture, community and family. The use of alcohol and other drugs (AOD) is not a failing.

With profound respect for the sovereignty, culture, and rights of First Peoples, VAADA will walk with Victorians on the journey to Treaty. We recognise that when it comes to First Peoples' communities, cultures and lands, the experts are, of course, First Peoples.

The past can't be changed, but we can choose to take steps today that will help heal the ongoing pain caused by the injustices of yesterday. We believe a better tomorrow is possible, and VAADA pledges its support to the First Peoples' Treaty process in Victoria.

To help build support for a shared journey to Treaty, VAADA will:

- Maintain First Peoples' representation on the Board
- Collaborate with Aboriginal leaders to establish an Aboriginal Advisory Committee as part of our organisational governance framework
- Seek guidance from the Aboriginal Advisory Committee to implement VAADA's Aboriginal Engagement Plan
- Promote awareness of First Peoples' history, cultures and ways of healing amongst our members and facilitate connections between Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations (ACCOs) and mainstream AOD services to optimise choice and autonomy for the community.
- Continue to advocate for the implementation of actions from the Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Partnerships Agreement relating to the AOD sector, along with the implementation of recommendations from the Yoorrook Justice Commission.

By making this pledge, we affirm our commitment to the self-determination of First Peoples in Victoria as they assert their rights, tell their truths, and chart a path towards, and healing through, Treaty-making.

Together, we will create a future where First Peoples' voices are heard, rights are respected, and justice is realised for generations to come.