

Trust for Nature *Statement of Intent and Commitment to Victorian Traditional Owner Groups*

Trust for Nature recognises Victoria's Traditional Owners' past and continuing spiritual and cultural connection to our wonderful land, wildlife, fresh water and salt water environments. Trust for Nature shares with Victorian Traditional Owners a deep appreciation for native wildlife and habitats on both public and private land and in aquatic environments. Trust for Nature recognises that all Victorians share in the benefits of the custodianship and caring for country that Traditional Owners have practised for centuries.

The Trust is committed to assisting Traditional Owner endeavours to conserve, restore where possible and protect natural environments, wildlife and cultural heritage values.

Trust for Nature is committed to meaningful engagement and partnership approaches to working with Victorian Traditional Owner groups, now and in the future, while recognising Trust for Nature's focus on private land conservation as well as any legislative or economic limits we may have. We know our collaboration will need regular review, learning and ongoing dialogue. In this, we will be guided by four (4) key principles:

- Recognition and respect
- Cultural learning and development
- Healthy natural environments and ecosystems
- Capacity building and economic development

Recognition and Respect

Trust for Nature is committed to

- Recognising Traditional Owner rights, interests and aspirations when interpreting the objects of the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972* which include ecological, natural and historical interest matters, when deciding how we deliver public scientific and educational outcomes
- Acknowledging custodianship and country protocols as agreed by Traditional Owners
- Promoting the active participation of Traditional Owners in our activities
- Recognising Victorian Traditional Owner structures of representation and drawing upon them to better inform our work
- Recognising traditional ownership of country formalised in Recognition and Settlement Agreements entered into by the Victorian Government with Traditional Owner Corporations under the *Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010* (Vic) or determinations of Native Title under the *Native Title Act 1993* (C'wealth), by Trust for Nature's Board of Trustees formally marking each such milestone, including in formal deeds of covenant entered into by Trust for Nature under the *Victorian Conservation Trust Act 1972*
- Respecting Traditional Owner rights to manage and protect their cultural heritage under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006* (Vic)

Cultural Learning and Development

Trust for Nature is committed to

- Learning and adopting new approaches that will work best work for Victorian Traditional Owners and the communities they represent
- An ongoing program of cultural awareness and learning for its staff, volunteers and private landholders with conservation agreements

Healthy Natural Environments and Ecosystems

Trust for Nature is committed to

- Making time within our private land conservation planning processes to learn from Traditional Owners about culturally important natural environments, ecosystems and species on country
- Protecting tangible Aboriginal cultural heritage on our conservation reserves through sensitive land management practices in and around Aboriginal cultural heritage sites or where artefacts may occur.
- Initiating and continuing engagement with Victorian Traditional Owner Groups about potential projects and partnerships to realise mutually agreed conservation priorities

Capacity building and economic development

Trust for Nature is committed to

- Helping build economic opportunities for Victorian Traditional Owners across all our service areas, e.g. commercial biodiversity offsets, revolving fund purchases, Aboriginal traineeships/internships
- Actively seeking to engage business enterprises established by Victorian Traditional Owners in our operations, e.g. procurement contracts; contracting Indigenous bush crews to assist us to deliver land management projects
- Always looking for opportunities for Victorian Traditional Owners to work with landholders of conservation covenanted land, or in any other aspect of our activities
- Sharing our scientific, land transaction, project management and conservation finance knowledge and expertise with Victorian Traditional Owners as well as seeking partnerships to provide employment-related opportunities within these areas

What We Will Do Next

Trust for Nature recognises that implementing our *Statement of Intent and Commitments to Victorian Traditional Owners* will best occur when working together with each Traditional Owner Corporation and if separate, Registered Aboriginal Parties (RAPs) on projects and mutual priorities. A map of current Victorian Registered Aboriginal Parties is incorporated with this Statement. Our staff will work to do this across Victoria.

We believe this process of engagement and implementation can be ‘enabled’ through the use of Trust for Nature’s capabilities and services, including

- Conservation action planning and Geospatial Information Systems
- Land protection services
- Post protection and land stewardship services
- Commercial services and biodiversity markets
- Conservation reserves management
- Trust funds management, corporate and management services

We commit to annually reviewing and publicly reporting upon our progress in honouring and implementing this Statement of Intent and Commitment to Victorian Traditional Owners.

Endorsed by Trust for Nature’s Board of Trustees, June 2017



