



**FNLRS**

FIRST NATIONS  
LEGAL & RESEARCH  
SERVICES

# STRATEGIC PLAN



# Our Vision

All First Nations groups in Victoria are formally recognised and supported.



# Our Mission

To be the service provider of choice for supporting First Nations groups to realise and exercise their land-based rights and interests.

# Guiding Principles



## Supporting self-determination

First Nations people have fundamental rights to be in control and make decisions about all aspects of their life.

The principle of self-determination underpins all our work.



## Integrity

We work with excellence, honesty and rigour in supporting First Nations people.



## Appreciation

We recognise, value and respect the significant contributions First Nations people bring to our work. We acknowledge success and celebrate our achievements in working with First Nations people.



## Openness

We listen with intent, work with transparency, and are committed to finding innovative strategies to realise the aspirations of First Nations people.



## Safety

The wellbeing of our staff and First Nations people we work with are paramount. We strive to provide culturally safe environments that promote healing, sharing, and positive collaborations.



## Respect

We respect First Nations people, their Country, cultural values and knowledge.



# Introduction

Our FNLR Strategic Plan sets the direction for our work with Victorian First Nations people for the next three years.

We will be leveraging from the achievements of the last 21 years to pave a pathway forward that continues to promote Victoria's First Nations people, their connection to Country and their Traditional Owner Corporations.



As the native title services provider for Victorian First Nations people, we have a responsibility that is legal, statutory and cultural. The work that we undertake in progressing the rights of First Nations people is fundamental. It underpins the wellbeing and health of First Nations people and Country, and acknowledges the rights and responsibilities of those people who have been here for more than 65,000 years.

We recognise that our capacity to continue delivering high-

quality services is largely dependent upon our organisational capacity to anticipate and proactively respond to change. In 2022 we commissioned a Strategic Review to broadly consider our role, operations and structure within the changing rights recognition environment of Victoria. The Review team consulted widely with Victorian First Nations people and other key stakeholders in the sector. The Review validated our work while making recommendations for change which have shaped our Strategic Plan.



The landscape of First Nations people's rights and recognition in Victoria is evolving rapidly. Until recently, there were three active pieces of legislation in Victoria which provide acknowledgement of Traditional Ownership, or at least some level of 'formal recognition' by the State.

These are the Native Title Act 1993 (Cth), the Traditional Owner Settlement Act 2010 (Vic) and the Aboriginal Heritage Act 2006 (Vic). The introduction of the Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018 (Vic) has now seen the development of additional recognition pathways including through allocation of reserve seats for First Nation groups on the First People's Assembly of Victoria and the opportunity to negotiate local Traditional Owner treaties under the Treaty Negotiation Framework.

No other jurisdiction in Australia provides First Nations people with so many forums through which their group can be 'recognised' by the State and by each other. This represents growing opportunities for us to expand our support to Victorian Traditional Owners to not only obtain recognition of their native title and other land-based rights, but to also leverage those rights for better cultural, political, social and economic outcomes in line with their self-determined aspirations.

It is a privilege to be on this journey with First Nations people and to be able to deliver on these strategic objectives over the next three years and beyond.





# Key Areas

All First Nations groups in Victoria are formally recognised and supported.



RECOGNITION, RIGHTS  
AND INTERESTS



POST-DETERMINATION



TREATY



ENGAGEMENT



GOVERNANCE AND  
WORKPLACE



DATA SOVEREIGNTY



## Recognition, rights and interests

**GOAL:** First Nations people realise their land justice aspirations.

### WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Providing high quality professional services to secure native title or alternative settlement outcomes for First Nations people.
- Supporting Traditional Owner Corporations to hold and effectively manage benefits and responsibilities obtained from statutory recognition.
- Maximising benefits to First Nations people through the strategic negotiation of agreements with stakeholders.
- Increasing capacity to outsource to third party legal service providers for active legal disputes.
- Ensuring the promotion of culturally and healing informed approaches to dispute resolution in formal recognition processes.
- Supporting First Nations people to be self-determining in formal recognition processes.

### OUR SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY:

- First Nations groups' feedback and perceptions on the value of FNLRs' support to achieve land justice aspirations.
- Number of full group meetings, research reports and presentations delivered.
- Number of attendees at, and level of engagement in, FNLRs convened meetings.
- The progress of the Traditional Owner groups we support towards achieving determinations of native title or alternative land justice outcomes.



## Post-determination

**GOAL:** Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations are productive, independent and self-determining corporations.

### WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Providing high quality professional services to Traditional Owner Corporations post-determination in accordance with their needs and aspirations.
- Tailoring our services to reflect the diversity which exists in and between First Nations groups, their decision-making processes and way of doing business more broadly.
- Building institutional knowledge and skills to expand our expertise and offering to Traditional Owner Corporations post-determination to build independence, capability, and self-determination.
- Expanding our capacity to support First Nations people engage in the renewable energy sector and other major infrastructure projects.

### OUR SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY:

- The volume of post-determination assistance and advice we provide to Traditional Owner groups.
- Client feedback on the quality of our services and the relevance of our skills and experience in meeting their post-determination needs.
- The strength and value of our networks and partnerships.
- Maintenance of a suitably skilled workforce with low staff turnover.
- Networks and partnerships established.



## Treaty

**GOAL:** First Nations groups successfully negotiate Treaty outcomes.

### WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Maintaining a position of agility and responsiveness to Treaty processes.
- Promoting and working towards alignment of Treaty and native title claims and compensation processes.
- Continuing to build strong working relationships with the First People's Assembly of Victoria and the Treaty Authority and other relevant stakeholders to help progress Treaty and native title processes in Victoria.
- Supporting Treaty negotiations and processes.

### OUR SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY:

- The volume of Treaty negotiation assistance and advice we provide to Traditional Owner groups.
- Client feedback on the quality of our services and the relevance of our skills and experience in meeting their Treaty preparedness and negotiation needs.
- The strength of our working relationships with relevant stakeholders.





## Engagement

**GOAL:** Victorian First Nations and other key stakeholders are aware of and are confident in accessing our services.



### WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Continuing to build respectful relationships with First Nations people and other key stakeholders.
- Developing engagement strategies including communicating our work and successes more broadly.
- Ensuring greater accessibility of services to a wider range of the First Nations people, including younger people, Elders and people with disabilities.

### OUR SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY:

- Disaggregated data on clients engaging with our services.
- Instances of external communications.
- Traffic on digital platforms.
- Feedback from clients.



## Governance and Workplace

**GOAL:** FNLRS is an employer of choice.

### WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Promoting FNLRS as an employer of choice.
- Strengthening governance by diversifying the composition and skills of the board.
- Ensuring high levels of transparency around cultural governance structure, role, and services.
- Continue to promote a collaborative and culturally safe work environment, noting the additional challenges associated with flexible work arrangements.
- Expand recruitment networks and career pathways for people working in the rights recognition sector.
- Continue to explore recruitment strategies to attract and advance First Nations people within the organisation and board.

### OUR SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY:

- First Nations staff as a percentage of workforce (FTE) at all levels.
- Staff satisfaction surveys.
- Maintenance of suitably skilled workforce with low staff turnover.



## Data Sovereignty

**GOAL:** Victorian First Nations manage and store their materials in line with self-determination and principles of data sovereignty.

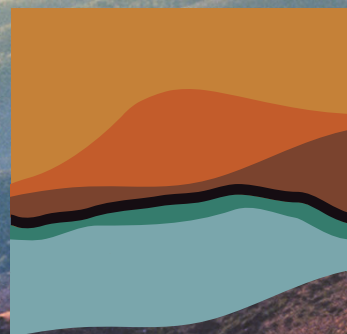
### WE WILL DO THIS BY:

- Establishing a legal and ethical framework for the return of materials to the rightful owners.
- In line with the principles of data sovereignty, supporting and empowering Traditional Owner Corporations to manage their materials securely in accordance with their cultural and legal obligations.

### OUR SUCCESS WILL BE MEASURED BY:

- FNLRS and Traditional Owner Corporations are suitably resourced for the implementation of a statewide data sovereignty project.
- Number of Traditional Owner Corporations engaged in the return of materials process.
- Feedback from Traditional Owner Corporations.





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