



CLOSING THE GAP PARTNERSHIP FORUM STATEMENT

20 SEPTEMBER 2022

Victoria should be committed to build a better future with First Nations people, not building monuments to colonisation

A government engaged in negotiating a Treaty with First Nations people should engage in that process in a serious and respectful way – not only at the negotiating table, but in everything they do.

The decision to rename the Maroondah Hospital after a former Queen of the United Kingdom is not a serious or respectful choice by a government doing Treaty.

Maroondah is an Aboriginal word. Erasing an Aboriginal word from a public building speaks directly to the erasure our people experienced. The genocide of our people that started with massacres and continued right through much of the Queen's reign with the attempted forced assimilation of the Stolen Generations.

Even today, the Premier has responded to criticism of his decision by dismissing it. If the Premier is committed to the Treaty process, he will have to have many tough conversations with our communities. It is not a good sign that he has run so quickly from this discussion.

This comes after the Federal Government made the decision to ask us to mourn the Queen through a public holiday. Another government that lauds its commitment to Voice and Treaty, but did not think to give us a voice on this decision.

These decisions are not one-offs. Every day we are left out of decision-making process by governments that claim to enable Self Determination. Every day we deal with discrimination and bias. Each little decision compounds to build a system that continues the harm that was first brought to these shores by the British Empire that the Queen would later inherit.

Naming a major hospital after a Queen of the United Kingdom adds yet another barrier for the Aboriginal community – and undoes the decades of work by our people to build inviting, culturally safe spaces.

Deaths in custody, intergenerational trauma, higher rates of mental illness, higher rates of chronic disease, institutionalised racism, and barriers to access in health and aged care services are just some of the major disadvantages being experienced by our communities because of the type of decision-making we have seen from governments in recent weeks.

Governments make these decisions knowing that it results in worse outcomes for our people. They make the choice that getting in on media coverage of the Queen’s death is politically expedient and worth the damage it will inflict on First Nations people.

That decision-making will not cut it at the Treaty table. It must stop now. Governments must treat us seriously and with respect.

It is never too late to reverse a bad decision.

Closing the Gap Partnership Forum Members:

▪ Dr Vicki Couzens	▪ VACL	▪ Culture and languages
▪ Felicia Dean	▪ Rumbalara	▪ Disability
▪ Lisa Thorpe	▪ Bubup Wilam	▪ Early childhood care and development
▪ James Atkinson	▪ ACES	▪ Elders and aged care
▪ Paul Paton	▪ FVTOC	▪ - Economic development and employment ▪ - Land and Waters
▪ Troy Walsh (on behalf of Jill Gallagher)	▪ VACCHO	▪ Health
▪ Darren Smith	▪ AHV	▪ Housing
▪ Dr Simone Gristwood	▪ Djirra	▪ Family Violence
▪ Nerita Waight	▪ VALS	▪ Justice and youth justice
▪ Gavin Brown	▪ VAHS	▪ Social and emotional wellbeing
▪ Bonnie Dukakis	▪ Koorie Youth Council	▪ Youth
▪ Neville Atkinson	▪ VAEAI	▪ Education and skills
▪ Professor Mark Rose	▪ Marrung	▪ Governance Forum Delegate
▪ Michael Graham	▪ VAHWPF	▪ Governance Forum Delegate

▪ James Atkinson	▪ ASGF	▪ Governance Forum Delegate
▪ Darren Smith	▪ VAHFF IWG	▪ Governance Forum Delegate
Raylene Harradine	▪ Aboriginal Children's Forum	▪ Governance Forum Delegate