



Bending towards justice - Yoorrook Justice Commission recommendations

Issued July 2025

⁸ Zacchaeus said to the Lord, "I want to do good. I will give half of my money to the poor. If I have cheated anyone, I will pay them back four times more."

⁹ Jesus said, "Today is the day for this family to be saved from sin. Yes, even this tax collector is one of God's chosen people."¹⁰ The Son of Man came to find lost people and save them."

Luke 19:8-10

Somewhere we must come to see that human progress never rolls in on the wheels of inevitability. It comes through the tireless efforts and the persistent work of dedicated individuals who are willing to be co-workers with God. And without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the primitive forces of social stagnation... We shall overcome because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice.

Rev Dr Martin Luther King Jr, "Remaining Awake Through a Great Revolution".

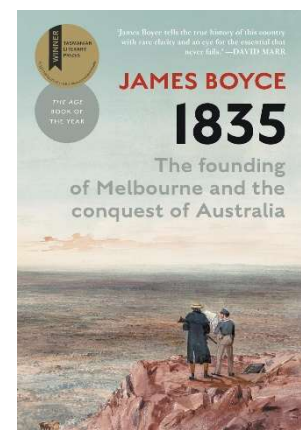
Truth-telling lays the foundation for change. It enables us to recommend the reforms needed to laws, institutions and systems, so these can be addressed through Treaty negotiations. It's how we begin to rebuild trust and to establish a new relationship between First Peoples, the state and all Australians.

This moment is not just about Aboriginal people. It is about the kind of nation we want to be. A nation mature enough to face its past. A nation proud enough to face its past. A nation proud enough to embrace the oldest continuing culture on Earth. A nation strong enough to take responsibility and act.

Travis Lovett, Kerrupmara/Gunditjmara man and Traditional Owner, deputy chair of the Yoorrook Justice Commission

The Gospel account of Jesus' encounter with Zacchaeus exemplifies a person seeking to start correcting past injustices. Zacchaeus was the chief tax collector for the Roman Empire in the city of Jericho. He became wealthy from his collaboration with the occupation of the Roman Empire.

Australia was conquered by the British Empire, causing significant and ongoing injustice for the First Peoples. James Boyce's 2011 book, *1835: The Founding of Melbourne and the Conquest of Australia*, documents the brutal conquest of Victoria. He documented how hundreds of settlers seized land for themselves in pursuit of wealth, often against instructions from London and against the wishes of the Governor of the time. However, their actions were ultimately endorsed by the colonial authorities. The result was that First Peoples had their food sources disrupted so that they would take sheep or cattle as compensation. Armed conflict would result. He estimates that between 350 and 1,000 First Peoples in Victoria were murdered or killed in the conflict by settlers between 1835 and 1850. Only one settler was prosecuted for the murder of a First Person during this period. However, in total, an estimated 80% of the First People population died largely from imported diseases, the effects of which were exacerbated by the destruction of the First People's food sources.



None of us were part of the historical conquest of Victoria. However, we have been unwitting beneficiaries of the injustice. At the same time, we have the opportunity to do the "hard work",



in the words of Rev Martin Luther King Jr, towards the process of seeking to correct the injustice.

The “hard work” for us to do in correcting past injustices is to support the treaty process in Victoria and urge the Victorian Government to implement the recommendations of the Yoorrook Justice Commission. The Yoorrook Justice Commission was an independent formal truth-telling process into historical and ongoing injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria. The Yoorrook Justice Commission was led by five Commissioners, of whom four were First Peoples. The Commission’s final report to the Victorian Government was tabled in Victorian Parliament on 1 July 2025.

The Yoorrook Justice Commission made 148 recommendations. These included that the Victorian Government:

- Negotiate treaties with First Peoples that give full effect to self-determination;
- Negotiate with the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria the establishment of an independent and authoritative oversight and accountability commission for the monitoring and evaluation of First Peoples-related policies and programs;
- Substantially increase investment in Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisation prevention and early intervention services to keep First Peoples children out of the child protection system;
- Enable and supports the development of a First Peoples’ Renewable Energy Strategy;
- Ensure the representation of perspectives of First Peoples in the school curriculum; and,
- Create a First Peoples Education Council to oversee First Peoples’ school education.

Newscorp, through *The Herald Sun* and *The Australian*, is running a campaign against any measures to meaningfully address the injustice that has been suffered by First Peoples in Victoria. They are promoting the appalling view that the conquest, which killed 80% of the First Peoples in Victoria, was to the benefit of First Peoples. We need to write to the Victorian Government to show ordinary Victorians do not share the views of the senior management and columnists at Newscorp, and urge the Victorian Government to stay committed to the treaty process.

What you can do

Write polite and respectful letters or emails to:

The Hon Jacinta Allen
Premier
1 Treasury Place,
East Melbourne VIC 3002

The Hon Natalie Hutchins
Minister for Treaty and First Peoples
121 Exhibition Street
Melbourne VIC 3000

Salutation: Dear Premier

Salutation: Dear Minister

E-mail: jacinta.allan@parliament.vic.gov.au

E-mail: minofficehutchins@ecodev.vic.gov.au

Points to make in your letters or e-mails:

- Welcome the Victorian Government’s commitment to negotiate treaties with the First Peoples of Victoria to address the historical and ongoing injustice they suffered as a result of colonisation.
- Urge the Government not to be deterred from correcting the historical and ongoing injustice suffered by First Peoples by the campaign being run by the Newscorp papers against self-determination for First Peoples.
- Urge the Victoria Government, through the treaty process and consultation with the First Peoples Assembly of Victoria and First Peoples generally, to implement recommendations made by the Yoorrook Justice Commission.