

QUESTIONS TAKEN ON NOTICE AND FURTHER INFORMATION AGREED TO BE SUPPLIED AT THE HEARINGS

Hon Natalie Hutchins MP

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

1. On behalf of Ms Pennicuik, regarding budget paper 3, page 3, the Aboriginal affairs output: my question relates to treaty expenditure in budget paper 3, detailed on pages 3, 5 and 308. The government has allocated \$9 million for the election of an independent Aboriginal representative body and to continue the government's preparation for treaty.

Firstly, we are getting very mixed messages, including that the commissioner will continue consultations on the Aboriginal representative body, including on the recommendations of the community assembly, yet according to this budget item it seems clearly locked in that elections will take place. So can the minister clarify that?

Secondly, how much of the \$9 million will be spent on holding elections versus other items? For example, how much will be spent on community consultations, on establishing the elders council and on other items?

(Asked by Mr Dimopoulos on behalf of Ms Pennicuik, pages 6-7 of the Aboriginal Affairs portfolio transcript)

Response:

The Victorian Treaty Advancement Commissioner (Commissioner) has been tasked with establishing the Aboriginal Representative Body (Body). In doing so, the Commissioner will draw on the recommendations contained in the final report of the Aboriginal Treaty Working Group on the design of the Body. These recommendations were informed by engagement with over 7,000 Aboriginal Victorians, as well as by the findings of the Community Assembly.

A key finding from community consultations was that the Body will comprise Victorian traditional owners elected by the Victorian Aboriginal community. The Commissioner has been engaging with traditional owners and other Aboriginal Victorians across the State about their aspirations for treaty, including how the Body can best be established. The Commissioner is carefully considering the process and timing of elections, with the expectation of establishing the Body by mid-2019. The Commissioner is dedicated to ensuring the cultural integrity of the Body and its election processes, especially by incorporating the voices of elders and respecting traditional owner structures.

Section 13 of the *Advancing the Treaty Process with Aboriginal Victorians Act 2018* (Act) envisions that the Body will be established by 1 July 2019. This ensures the momentum of the treaty process will be maintained. Section 13 also includes mechanisms to hold the Government accountable to Parliament if the Body is not established within the stipulated time. Holding elections will form an essential part of efforts to establish the Body.

To ensure the Body can be established within the timeframe stipulated by the Act, \$9 million was provided for treaty and self-determination in the 2018/19 Victorian Budget (Budget). This funding will support the establishment of the Aboriginal Representative Body, including by holding elections.

The bulk of the \$9 million provided for treaty in the Budget will be allocated to support establishment of the Body. This includes funding for the Commissioner to continue community engagement, facilitate elections and provide operational resourcing for the Body.

Hon Natalie Hutchins MP
Minister for Aboriginal Affairs