

Together for Treaty



Conversations Guide

One-on-one conversations are a powerful way to build support for Treaty, truth-telling, and First Nations justice. They allow people to connect through shared values like fairness, respect, and self-determination. These conversations help elevate the narrative of strength, leadership, and aspirations of First Nations peoples. By sharing stories and listening with empathy, people are more likely to understand the need for justice and reflect on how they can be part of the solution.

How to have powerful conversations

To engage and persuade people on any issue, we must engage their hearts and minds and motivate them to take action. It's best to ask questions, listen with empathy, share your story and experiences (why you think, feel and act the way you do), and thank them for raising their questions and concerns. By doing this, you open up space for an honest conversation where you can build connections, listen without judgement, share your vision for the future and help the other person see where they fit and what they can do.

Some guiding principles...

- You don't need to be an expert on Treaty
- **Listen** more than you speak
- Amplify, share and support First Nation peoples' voices.
- **Share positive stories of First Nation peoples'** strength, knowledge and capability.
- **Share why you support Treaty** and connect it with shared values and vision.

The Four C's provide a framework to meaningfully engage with others and have persuasive conversations that lead to action.

- **Connection:** Who you are? Why do you care? Find shared values.
- **Context:** Why now? What are the challenges? What is the vision?

- **Commitment:** Ask them to take a specific action with you.
- **Catapult:** Build on that commitment with a job or responsibility.

Each conversation will be different and shouldn't feel overly scripted. Keep it natural and conversational; ask questions and actively listen.

Example

1. Connect: Share values and ask questions

Example: "I want the country our kids grow up in to be one where everyone is treated with respect, and where we look after one another. Treaty is a big part of that for me."

The best types of conversations build connection in a way that finds common ground through shared values and experiences.

2. Context: What's happening right now?

Example: "I got involved because I believe we all have a role to play in making sure First Nations communities can lead the way forward. Victoria is closer to Treaty than ever and if we build strong support now, we can build momentum across the country."

This is your chance to briefly share background information on the issue. Ask questions to draw out how they feel and talk through any questions they have.

3. Commitment: Invite them to take action

Example: "I'm heading along to a rally for Treaty in Melbourne next Sunday - would you like to join me?"

Help people see where they fit in. Encourage them to take a first step – big or small. The key here is to be specific i.e. date, time, place, number.

4. Catapult: Build on that commitment

Example: "So glad you're joining me! Let's meet at the tram at 9am and head in together?"

If someone says “Yes”, give them a real job or responsibility to walk away with. Think about the catapult as a springboard to more!

Talking points

Key values and messages

- **Community knows best:** Treaty is about putting First Nations people in the driver's seat so together they can make the decisions that affect their communities, culture and Country.
- **Unity and who we can be as a country:** We want a country that values all people, whether they have been here five years, five generations or five thousand generations. But too often, First Nations people have been ignored when we discuss who we are and what sort of country we want to be. Treaties provide a way to acknowledge past and ongoing injustices and work out how to create a shared future.

Sharing your support for Treaty:

Come up with a personalised answer. Think about your values, the future you want, positive stories you can share. Here are some examples to help you craft your own:

If you care about social equity and representation:

"When we listen to the solutions of people most affected, we get better outcomes. But successive governments have failed to listen to First Nations communities and act on the solutions that they are advocating for. As someone who knows what it feels like to not be listened to, I can empathise with this. Just as laws impacting rural people, older people or people with disability, will be better if we hear what they think – it is common sense to take leadership from First Nations people in laws and policies that impact them. Together we can say we're ready to listen to First Nations communities and hold the government accountable to acting on the solutions put forward by those most affected. By supporting Treaty, we can show respect and a commitment to listening to the expertise of First Nations people."

If you care about the climate and environment:

"Aboriginal communities have looked after Country since time immemorial and have a valuable role to play in addressing the climate crisis. From cultural burning, to regenerating rivers & waterways, Traditional Owners have critical expertise to building a more sustainable and climate-resilient future. But for too long, governments have refused to hear or take up this expertise.

"When we listen to each other, share our knowledge and work together, we all benefit. Together we can send a message to government that it's time to listen to and respect the leadership of Aboriginal communities in shaping policies that protect our climate and future generations. Supporting Treaty is a way to say that we want to hear the wisdom and expertise of the oldest living culture on earth."

If you care about healthcare:

“Taking care of one another is what community is all about. That’s why 40 years ago, when government health services were failing First Nations people, community leaders took the driver’s seat and set up Australia’s first community health centres. Today, these services are the best in the country and the government has modelled their health, legal aid and childcare off First Nations-led solutions. By supporting Treaty we can show that when you listen to the expertise of First Nations communities, everyone can thrive.”

Talking Treaty: Example

When it comes to First Nation communities, cultures and lands, the experts are First Nations people. Treaty is a chance to acknowledge past injustices and build a better, fairer future together.

Treaty is our chance to make sure Aboriginal communities always have the ability to come up with and deliver practical solutions at a local level. This is our chance to right the wrongs of the past and help create a better future together.

Victoria is making history; this is an Australia-first, and we have accepted the invitation to walk with First Peoples on the journey to Treaty. Showing widespread support and celebration for Treaty in Victoria can help to build momentum for truth-telling and Treaty processes across the country.

Responding to common concerns

We've already seen how the far right is going to try and fight back against truth-telling and Treaties. As they did in the referendum, they'll try to drive division and fear.

In our conversations, we can help break down their arguments and show people why collective action on these is so important.

The key things to do in these moments:

- **Listen:** Hearing concerns and what people have to say shows us what messages are sticking and what work we need to do.
- **You don't have to be an expert:** Bring it back to values, vision and hope. *Ie “I don’t know about that specifically but what I do know is / why I care is because...”*
- **Wrap it up:** If you feel like the conversation isn't landing or is becoming heated, it's ok to wrap it up. That first conversation could plant a seed and prompt further reflection.
- **Tell us:** Let us know the types of questions and concerns that keep coming up. Email info@commonthreads.org.au.

Here some examples of concerns you might hear and how to respond:

- How would a Treaty make a practical difference in the lives of First Nations people?
 - Treaties at their core are about putting First Nations people in the drivers seat when it comes to policies and decisions that impact them. We know that by doing this, policies work better and communities can thrive.
 - The Victorian Statewide Treaty can make sure Aboriginal people have the freedom and power to set the course and design solutions that work for their communities across a range of areas - like removing unfair barriers to healthcare and housing, making sure young people can thrive, and making sure all Victorians can learn about and celebrate First Nations cultures.
- Some politicians say that Treaty would make our community more divided. What would a Treaty mean for non-Indigenous people?
 - Treaty is about acknowledging the harm and injustice of the past, bringing communities together and building strong relationships based on self-determination. When we listen to each other and respect First Nations knowledge and expertise, we can create a better and fairer future that everyone can benefit from.

- Non-Indigenous people can also benefit from Treaty - whether through more opportunities to learn about and celebrate First Nations culture, or supporting the leadership of Traditional Owners in looking after Country for everyone.
- Where did the push for a Treaty come from - is it something most Aboriginal people support?
 - Many First Nations communities have been calling for truth-telling and Treaty for generations - since the time of colonisation.
 - The Treaty process in Victoria has been a decade-long process driven by First Nations communities. Right now, the First Peoples' Assembly - an elected body representing First Peoples across Victoria - is negotiating the statewide Treaty with the Victorian government. There has been extensive consultation with the Aboriginal community - including the establishment of a First Nations electoral roll and elections of regional representatives. Alongside the statewide process, there is the opportunity for different Victorian Traditional Owner groups to negotiate Treaty arrangements around local matters and their priorities for looking after Country.

See *FAQ below* for more detail on commonly raised questions.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is a Treaty?

A Treaty is a formal agreement between sovereign entities. In the context of First Nations peoples and Australian governments, Treaties would recognize the sovereignty of First Nations peoples and establish frameworks for addressing historical injustices, protecting rights, and creating pathways for self-determination.

In Victoria, a process has been underway since 2016 to enable First Peoples and the Victorian Government to negotiate Treaties. These Treaties will acknowledge the truth about what was done to Aboriginal people and make sure Aboriginal communities always have the freedom and power to come up with and deliver practical solutions at a local level.

Why is Treaty important?

We're all better off when we are free to set our own course and make decisions for ourselves, our families and our communities. But too often, successive Governments have forced their own ideas on how First Nations people should lead their own lives. Decisions about health, education and homelands keep being taken away from them. Treaty is about putting First Nations people in the driver's seat so together they can make the decisions that affect their communities, culture and Country. They know their communities best - so when they have a say over policies that impact them, they work better.

Treaty is also about how we can move together towards unity and a fairer future for everyone. We want a country that values all people, whether they have been here five years, five generations or five thousand generations. But too often, First Nations people have been ignored when they discuss who they are and what sort of country we want to be. Treaties provide a way to acknowledge past injustices, resolve differences, and work out how to create a shared future. Just as New Zealand has embraced Māori culture, we can create a future where we respect and value Aboriginal people and take pride in the oldest living culture in the world.

Tell me more about the truth-telling and Treaty process happening in Victoria?

Yoorrook truth-telling process: We can only be our best and create a country where everyone can thrive when we listen and acknowledge the truth of our past and present. We must speak the truth about Australia's history regarding Aboriginal people – including massacres, dispossession, and the violent suppression of language and culture – and understand how these systems continue today. Through truth-telling, we can honour the strength and survival of First Nations peoples and build a more just future together

The Yoorrook Justice Commission has led a groundbreaking truth-telling process here in Victoria: listening to the experiences of First Nations people and charting a course forward for action, healing and justice. When we face the truth with open hearts, we can build a better future together for us all.

Statewide Treaty process: Right now, the First Peoples' Assembly - an elected body representing First Peoples across Victoria - is negotiating a statewide Treaty with the Victorian government. This Treaty can make sure Aboriginal communities have the freedom and power to set the course and design solutions that work for their mob across a range of areas - like removing unfair barriers to healthcare and housing, making sure young people can thrive, and making sure all Victorians can learn about and celebrate First Nations cultures. Alongside the statewide process, there is the opportunity for different Traditional Owner groups to negotiate Treaty arrangements around local matters and their priorities for looking after Country.

You can watch, read and learn more about the work underway in Victoria here:

- [ABC feature](#) + [Four Corners episode](#) on the Yoorrook truth-telling process
- [Videos, media stories and submissions](#) on the Yoorrook website
- [Yarning up podcast episode](#) with Commissioner Travis Lovett
- [It's a Lot podcast episode](#) with Commissioner Lovett & Abbie Chatfield
- [Statewide Treaty explainer](#) from the First Peoples Assembly

What about Treaties in other states?

Australia is one of the only Commonwealth countries that has not signed a federal treaty or agreement with First Nations people. Treaty processes have fallen to the State Governments and are at varying stages:

- **NSW** committed to a 12-month consultation process in 2023 with discussions beginning in the coming months.
- In **Queensland**, a Path to Treaty process which began under Labor in 2019 was scrapped in 2024 by the incoming Liberal National Party.
- In **South Australia**, Aboriginal leaders are keen for discussions to restart but the state government has said no treaty will be negotiated before the next state election in March 2026.
- The **Tasmanian** government has committed to a truth-telling process, but has dropped Treaty discussions.
- The **Northern Territory's** Country Liberal Party (CLP) government scrapped the treaty process in February 2025.
- **Western Australia** has made no formal commitments.

Who is Common Threads?

Common Threads is a new First Nations led organisation that aims to grow and harness the power of emerging First Nations leadership, advocacy and changemaking to win transformative change. We are forging a new pathway to build Indigenous power and drive systemic change that centres the aspirations of our people - for Country, for community and for our rights.

Common Threads was co-founded by Dr Jackie Huggins AO (Bidjara / Birri Gubba Juru), Larissa Baldwin-Roberts (Widjabul Wia-bul / Bundjalung), and Amelia Telford (Bundjalung and South Sea Islander). Over the past five years, our team has led a range of movement-building and storytelling projects: from groundbreaking Passing the Message Stick research, to Common Threads summits bringing together hundreds of people in Magand-jin and Gimuy. In 2025, Common Threads officially launched as an independent, non-profit organisation. We are building national campaigns for truth, Treaties, land rights and climate justice - while providing support and resources to grassroots movements across the continent. We honour the leadership, knowledge and vision already held in communities and we work inclusively, backing collective action.