Catholic Social Services Victoria
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MEDIA RELEASE

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CSSV calls for return to bipartisan support as it launches Treaty Pledge

Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV) has this week launched its Treaty Pledge, formally committing to take meaningful steps to support Victoria's Treaty processes and calls on all political parties, regardless of the result of the upcoming Victorian State election, to wholeheartedly answer the call of Treaty to walk together. This is a key ask of CSSV's Reconciliation priorities for the 61st Parliament of Victoria, as outlined in its Election Statement *Dignity, hope and drawing closer to the margins*. Ahead of the election, CSSV sees united support and resourcing for Victoria's Treaty as vital to working for true reconciliation.

CSSV Council chair, Cathy Humphrey says:

> Victoria has taken meaningful steps and invested significant resources over the past decade to realise a more just future for First Peoples. This has been the result of deep listening, consultation and many years of hard work and planning. By investing in Australia's first formal truth-telling process and enacting Australia's first Treaty with First Peoples, Victoria has led the way in Australia to bring to life the generous invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart – to walk together for a better future.

Having made the Treaty agreements, and with the new institutions they created now established and functioning, CSSV calls on the next Government of Victoria to continue this good work by fully supporting and resourcing Gellung Warl and by enacting all Treaty commitments. The agreements of the Victorian Statewide Treaty establish mechanisms that give First Peoples a say on the issues that impact them, hold government accountable for their commitments, and support ongoing truth-telling processes.

The Treaty itself invites all Victorians to come together for a fairer, more just society: 'This path asks something of all of us. It asks us to listen, to care, and to walk forward in good faith – not as strangers, nor as adversaries, but as partners and equals.'[1]

The Australian Bishops, in their 2023-2024 statement, *Listen, Learn, Love*, particularly acknowledged the need for injustices to be recognised, and for deep listening and change to occur, urging: 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples need to be welcomed from the margins into the centre so that they can lead the discussions about change and implementation of actions to bring about healing and justice'.

[1] First Peoples of Victoria Ltd and The State of Victoria (2025), *Statewide Treaty*, p.9.

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In this spirit, CSSV's Treaty Pledge commits to:

- Supporting and promoting initiatives that facilitate meaningful dialogue and collaboration between First Peoples and non-Indigenous within the Catholic community in Victoria
- Continue to galvanise collaborative action across our membership network through the operation of the CSSV Reconciliation Working Group
- Advocating for policy reforms and legislative changes that promote the dignity of First Peoples and facilitate the implementation of Treaty commitments

CSSV encourages other Catholic organisations across Victoria to answer the invitation to walk forward together by making their own pledge of support for Treaty.

Remembering that bipartisan support for Treaty existed in Victoria until as recently as early 2024, Cathy Humphrey says CSSV urges a return to this united approach, particularly in light of the upcoming State Election: 'The only way we can build true solidarity with First Peoples is if we work together, putting aside our political differences, and prioritise relationships built on trust. This requires upholding the commitments that Treaty has made, engaging in real dialogue and working actively towards reconciliation.'

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