



**First Speech by Marcus Stewart
Inaugural Meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria**

10 December 2019

Thanks, Aunty Eleanor. As is our custom I too want to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and pay my respects to their Elders past and present, acknowledge the welcome to country we have had today but also acknowledge that I am a visitor on this country. I also want to acknowledge the Elders in the room, but also my Elders who are here today and my family, in particular Uncle Mick Harding, who was part of the treaty process, along with my wife and son and my cousin who is here today.

My name is Marcus Stewart. I am a Nira illim bulluk man of the Taungurung nation. I stand here with an enormous responsibility but also an amazing gift. That gift is being elected by the Taungurung people and the Taungurung Elders to represent their interests in this journey towards treaty. With this gift is an amazing opportunity. And as I look around the chamber at all 31 representatives, I see amazing talent, I see amazing integrity and I see a fierce leadership that is going to drive us forward.

Today onwards we are united. We are united more than ever. Jill said it earlier, Matt referenced it earlier as well: we are going to have disagreements, we are going to have robust discussions. That is the beauty of democracy. We live in the same democracy as every other single person in this state and in this country, and we are entitled to that robust discussion. But it is how we solve them robust discussions and disagreements to move forward—that is how we will make critical decisions.

My promise to this chamber, to my Elders, to my nation and to the Aboriginal community is to not waste a single minute, let alone second, on the what should have been, could have been or might have been, but what the responsibility is for us today, what it looks like tomorrow and how we drive forward together in unity for treaty. Thanks.

