



**First Speech by Alister Thorpe
Inaugural Meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria**

10 December 2019

I pay respect to the Wurundjeri/Woiwurrung people. I acknowledge their Elders past and present. They are the first peoples, the traditional owners, the protectors of the land we are meeting on today—this land the Victorian Parliament now stands on without any agreement or treaty. This meeting today signifies our intention to reclaim our rightful position as protectors of country and disrupt the current dominant structures right here in this place. This place is still on our land. I recognise all our ancestors. I recognise all Elders and knowledge holders across the country from diverse clans and language groups. We belong to this country. We have blood in the ground. I pay tribute to the resilience of all Indigenous peoples in Australia and across the world that have tirelessly fought, struggled and protested for the survival of their nations and the return of their lands.

I am Alister Henry Thorpe. I am a Gunai man through my father's country to the east. I am a Yorta Yorta through my mother's country to the north. I am Gunditjmara through my grandmother's country to the west. My family have endlessly struggled for our people's rights. They have staunchly campaigned for sovereignty, self-determination and recognition of past atrocities that have been committed against our peoples. The impact of colonisation and discriminatory government policies is still felt. Our people were displaced, stolen and removed from their country. Our people have been massacred and entire nations have disappeared. We must never forget. It is time for us to hold this government to account. That is what the Aboriginal community expect.

We can only move forward together as a nation if we address the past. It is a true test of a nation's character. In this moment we have an opportunity to determine our own future, and our law must underpin everything we do. This Assembly represents some of our nations, but we must build a pathway to full representation. Every Aboriginal nation must be represented. We will not be rushed. We have survived. We will never be assimilated. We need genocide to end, sovereignty acknowledged and treaties to be made.

