



**First Speech by Jacinta Chaplin  
Inaugural Meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria**

**10 December 2019**

I would like to acknowledge the country that we are on today, all our Elders from this country and our Elders back home and everybody's. My name is Jacinta Chaplin. I am from Nyah West. I am a proud Wadi Wadi woman. For me standing here today—

I must acknowledge the strength of my Elders before me and my ancestors before them. When I hear the stories of our people it makes me proud. I also acknowledge our non-Indigenous people that have stood with our Elders in the past and that stand with us today. I would also like to acknowledge my mum, who is here with me in this room. Youse all would have heard her.

***Members applauded.***

I admire her strength and the way that she holds herself. Without her constant support and guidance to keep me grounded, I would not be standing here as the strong woman that I am today. As a people we live in two very different worlds that are driven by two very different powers. Many laws have passed through these walls, laws that have taken our identity—tried to take identity away—and been designed to weaken us as a people. Our law is instilled in us and has never weakened. Our responsibility to protect the laws of our lands is in our hearts, it is in our blood and it is passed through our culture teachings. Our ancestors have led us to where we stand today. The pathways we are creating are for the future generations and for our next leaders, to keep our dreaming alive and our culture strong. I am proud to be the receiver of all the work that the Commission has done and the working group, and I am excited to see what the story of my grandchild is going to be from the work that we do here today. So thank you.

