



**First Speech by Matthew Burns
Inaugural Meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria**

10 December 2019

Thanks, Aunty. My name is Matthew Burns. I am a Nira-Balluk man from Taungurung Nation. I would firstly like to acknowledge the traditional owners of the land that we are standing on here today, the land of the Woiwurrung and Boon Wurrung people. I would also like to acknowledge my wife, Kate, my children, William and Imogen, my grandparents and my mum and dad as well, who have moulded me to be the person that I am and also enabled me to be here today.

I would also like to acknowledge the trust put in me by the Metropolitan electorate, the ones who voted me in here today. I am exceedingly proud and very humble to be standing here today. I would also like to acknowledge the strong leaders that have been here before us that have kept the flame alight to enable this day to come about. Without them consistently fighting, consistently keeping the message within our community, we would not be standing here today.

The opportunity treaty now provides can deal with past illegal actions to our people but yet build on a modern legacy for future generations to come. I wish to see sovereignty enshrined in all levels of law within the state of Victoria. Specifically the state has responsibility over law and order, schools, hospitals and health care, water, transport, agriculture, forests and local government, and I can see so many things within all those areas that require change to enable each traditional owner group, clan or mob to assert their sovereign rights on country, whether it be, for instance, redefining the boundaries of local government to incorporate traditional owner boundaries, enshrining traditional owners in local government and enabling them to have a majority voice on what occurs on country.

I would also just like to pick up a note that Jill had made previously about disagreement, and there is going to be disagreement here. I think disagreement is crucial to enabling good decisions to be made. If we all agreed with each other, I reckon we would be making bad decisions, to be honest. I think we need to look at things from many different sides to enable us to make the right decisions for our communities and the right decisions for Aboriginal people throughout Victoria. I am proud to be here today, and I am also proud very much to be working with all of you. Thank you.

