



**First Speech by Ngarra Murray
Inaugural Meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria**

10 December 2019

I acknowledge the first peoples of this land, the Wurundjeri and Woiwurrung peoples, and I pay my respects to their ancestors and I acknowledge their Elders here today, including Uncle Andrew. I pay homage to all our ancestors, nations and clans and to those who have come before us and those whose actions, lives and sacrifices helped create and shape our own. I honour my lineage and my strong foundation, and I remember my ancestors of blood, spirit and place. I am thankful to these great warriors, men and women. There is no relationship more important to me than the one I have with my people and my country.

My name is Ngarra Murray, and I have blood connection to the Wamba Wamba, Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung, Dhudhuroa, Baraparapa, Wurundjeri and Wergaia through my father and grandparents—I am multiclanned.

I stand here today as a representative of the Metropolitan Region, and I take this on with full responsibility for carrying my people's voices, initiating action and power from the ground up and being accountable and legitimate to those I represent. I want to ensure that the treaty process upholds our rights and values and respects our kinship structures in our nations and clans. Clans have priority rights, first rights, and they must have the opportunity to give or withhold their consent in their own way in this process.

This is our chance to address a long history of colonisation, colonialism and the scars it has left—a country built on a lie, a history of disempowerment, disadvantage, discrimination and despair. We will have to work hard to undo imposed systems and policies, laws and decisions that have been based on a colonial and paternalistic approach. But we must change the formal structures in the way that we take part. Treaties are a foundation for a renewed relationship, setting out our rules of governance. Treaties for our people will redefine and reaffirm our relationships and facilitate a new era of relations.

Any future negotiations must put decision-making powers back into our people's hands so that we can make our own choices and decisions about our people, our culture, our lands, our waters and our future. This is an opportunity to recognise the ongoing dimensions of our sovereignty and to build and expand the scope of that sovereignty so we can truly be self-determining. We have been focusing on surviving, but my hope for the future and for my children's future, that are here today, is that we are grounded in identity values and spirit and that we are strong, healthy and balanced clans and cultures at the core of being and doing, and that our philosophy and long-established kinship is respected, understood and appreciated on our lands, our terms, our way. Thank you.

