



**First Speech by Raylene Harradine
Inaugural Meeting of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria**

10 December 2019

Thank you. First and foremost, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where we are meeting and pay my respect to Elders past, present and future. It is with pleasure that I enter today's Assembly as a proud Aboriginal woman of Victoria and bring with me my ancestors and old people from which I am proud—my mother's country, the lands of the Wotjobaluk and the lands of the Yung Balug Dja Dja Wurrung, and my father's country, the lands of Ladji Ladji in the north-west of Victoria, as well as my connections to Ngarrindjeri.

Aboriginal First Nations, traditional owners, observe an intricate system of relationships and management and songlines, to not only survive but thrive on a continent that is in itself an intricate, complex environment. Today marks a significant event in disrupting the dispossession that has occurred for over 200 years, not just for my people but for all the peoples and future generations across the north-west of Victoria who voted for me. I will undertake this role to ensure that our future generations are recognised as First Peoples of this vast country and that our children and their children's children are not only surviving but thriving in this country. I say this because I strongly believe that as a collective we can make a difference. I look forward to embarking on this journey with fellow members of the Assembly and our wider communities across Victoria.

Finally, in closing, I want to reiterate and acknowledge the many Aboriginal committees across the north-west region. I will strive to listen to what our communities are saying, and in doing so will ensure that our voices are heard. I also pledge to provide updates on the Assembly's progress. I am proud to be a part of the change, and I want to, before I close, acknowledge the amazing works that Jill has done as the Commissioner, and the interim committee. Thank you.

