

Trailblazer's descendant makes the cut for First Peoples' Assembly



Ngarra Murray: 'This is bigger than ourselves, this is about all our peoples and our inherent rights.'

- **DAVID KING**

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The great-granddaughter of Australian rules great and Aboriginal leader Sir Douglas Nicholls is among the 21 indigenous Victorians elected to the state's First Peoples' Assembly.

Ngarra Murray was one of nine representatives provisionally elected to the Metro region, after weeks of voting open to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Victorians over 16.

Ms Murray, a Wamba Wamba, Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung woman, said she was honoured to be elected. "I want to ensure the treaty negotiation framework upholds our rights and values as First Peoples, and that it respects our traditional kinship structures in our nations and clans."

Her great-grandfather, Sir Douglas, was a footballer, pastor, activist and governor of South Australia, who was born at the Cumeragunja Aboriginal mission in NSW. He played more than 50 games for Fitzroy, was the first indigenous Australian to be knighted and the first to be appointed to vice-regal office.

The AFL's indigenous round is named after him.

"Our great-grandfather left his mark on the world in more ways than one. His vision, perseverance and commitment to our peoples helped him rise up in the face of adversity and achieve almost impossible triumphs. This is bigger than ourselves, this is about all our peoples and our inherent rights," Ms Murray said.

The First Peoples' Assembly will ultimately be made up of 32 members and represent communities in setting with government the ground rules for negotiations, including how treaties can be agreed in Victoria, and setting up an independent umpire for treaty talks.

The 11 non-elected representatives are reserved for the formally recognised traditional owner groups of Victoria. Voting closed on October 20 and the counting was finalised on Monday.

"Over 70 traditional owners put their hand up across the state. They are all leaders, they have much to contribute as the journey continues," the Treaty Advancement Commission said in a statement on Tuesday.

The assembly will have its first formal meeting in Victoria's Legislative Council chambers on December 10 and 11.

Also elected was Natarsha Bamblett, a former VFLW player with the Richmond Tigers, who represents the northeast region.