

Thank you for inviting me as a very late starter in this election campaign.

I acknowledge the Wurunjeri people of the Kulin Nation and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I acknowledge that I am standing on stolen land and sovereignty has never been ceded.

I also pay my respects to all Indigenous people here tonight. And pay particular respect to the Daly family. I admire April's courage in speaking here tonight and her advocacy. I also pay my respects to Jess. I have enormous admiration for Jess and her ongoing fight for justice.

I am obviously a white woman. I attended school in an era when we didn't learn anything about Indigenous culture. We learnt about James Cook – that is all I can remember.

When I left school I trained to be a nurse. I worked as a nurse on Palm Island. It was on Palm Island, that I began to understand our shameful history.

I lived in the nurse's quarters that was surrounded by barbed wire. I began to understand systemic racism. If anything taught me about the need for structural reform, it was my time working on Palm Island.

One of the things I appreciate about tonight is getting us white people to listen. We did not listen on Palm Island. Every committee I was on had only white people. There was no local representation on any of the hospital committees. And Palm Island had a racist police force.

Another strong memory is the suicide rate. Kids under the age of 20. There was at least 1 suicide per week during my time on Palm Island.

So I had a rude awakening to the injustices of Australia's First Nation people.

I will make one final comment. Last Friday night I went out. Several of us had too much to drink – yet none of us considered being arrested for public drunkenness. We were white people: why would we think about it?

Thanks to April, I am now thinking about it. I am sure our MP in Victorian Senate, Fiona Patten, will get onto it.

Fiona is also onto spent convictions. Those who committed a crime in younger years - those convictions should not stay with you for your entire life.

Thank you for listening.