



# A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS: LISTENING TO THE STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

Author: Celia Kemp, Reconciliation Coordinator  
Artist: The Reverend Glenn Loughrey

An ABM Study Guide for Individuals and Groups



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Please contact Glenn Loughrey at [glennloughrey.com](http://glennloughrey.com) for further information, to purchase his art (all paintings in this study are for sale) or to support his work.



## About the Artist

***Yuwin ngadbi Glenn Loughrey***  
***Dyirmadilinya badbu Wiradjuri***

*My name is Glenn Loughrey and I am proud to be a Wiradjuri man.*

Glenn Loughrey is a priest at St. Oswald's Anglican Church, Glen Iris and a member of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council.

He is an artist who fuses Indigenous art styles with Western forms of storytelling. He was a finalist in the 2017 Doug Moran Portrait Prize and has had solo exhibitions in Victoria, NSW and Queensland.

His art expresses his journey into the story of his family and his mob and reflects the interaction between the dominant culture and the oldest living culture on the planet. It explores the impact of that interaction from the Indigenous point of view and its purpose is to engage, challenge and initiate action leading to unification and reconciliation.

### **"Treaty"**

*Acrylic on canvas*

We are in the process of a discussion about how to recognise indigenous Australians in the constitution. This piece suggests that only when deep dialogue occurs between equals resulting in true sovereignty and a treaty that recognises such will we have recognition. The piece uses red to signify the bloody history of our country, the black lines as the fences and policies we have used to further that history, the black and white squares as the way we view our selves in opposition. The tentative yellow lines and the meeting place reminds us that we have only just begun and that this process is fragile and can collapse at anytime.

*Front Cover Painting: Treaty*



## About the Author

**Celia Kemp** is the Reconciliation Coordinator for the Anglican Board of Mission. She lives in Alice Springs and spends her time on community, Scripture, theology, prayer, desert spirituality and nature.

Celia graduated from Melbourne University with Honours in medicine and law. She has worked as Counsel Assisting the Coroner in Western Australia and as a Prosecutor and the Deputy Coroner in the Northern Territory

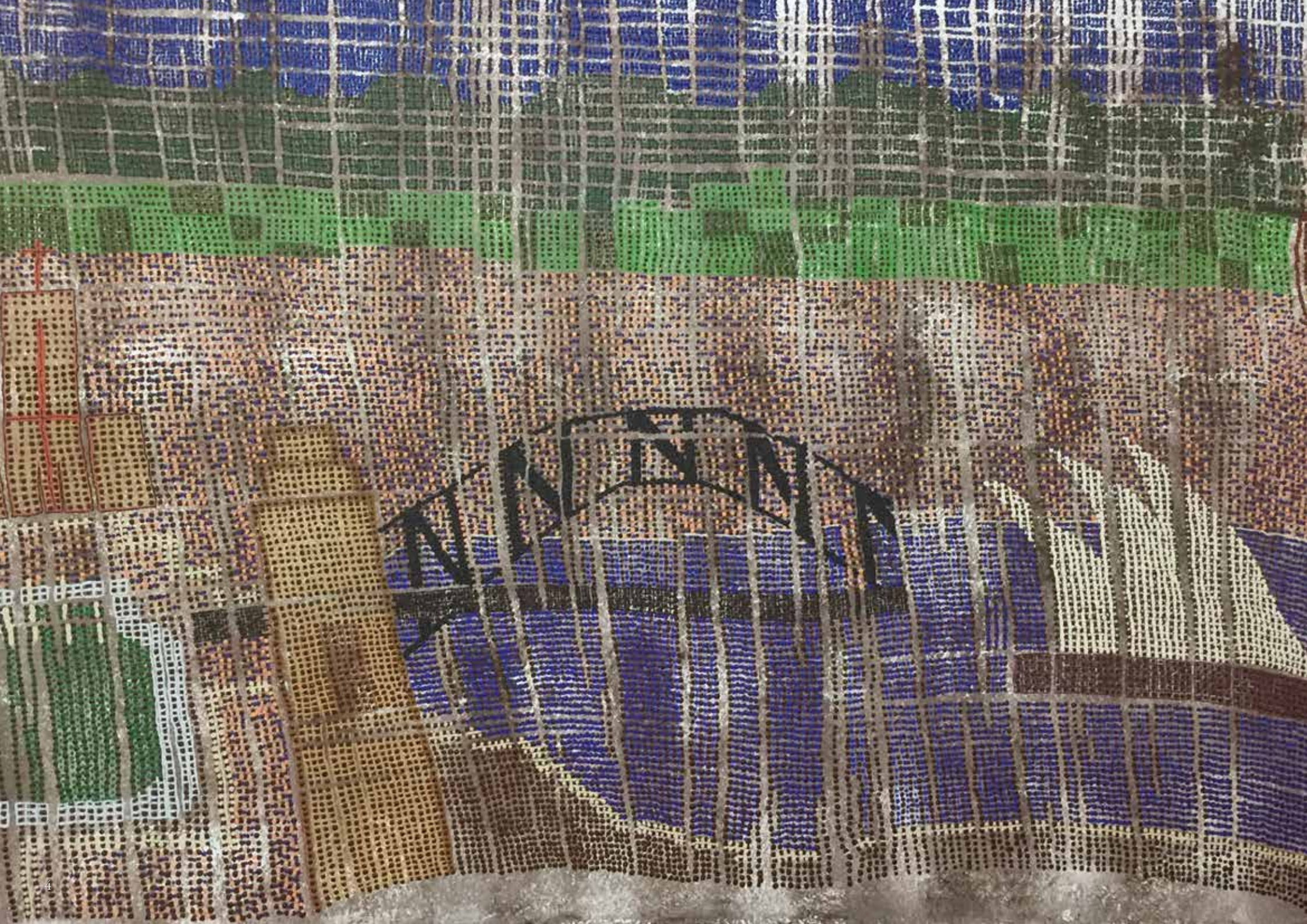
She was a member of the National Medical Health and Research Council and a Senior Research Fellow in the Centre for Health Policy, Programs and Economics at Melbourne University.

Celia is the author of the acclaimed *Into the Desert* and *Deep calls to Deep* bible study apps.

## Index

<b>Credits</b>	2
<b>Introduction</b>	5
<b>The statement from the heart</b>	8
<b>Part 1</b> the doctrine of discovery	11
<b>Part 2</b> lucky for who?	21
<b>Part 3</b> we don't listen	31
<b>Part 4</b> "the torment of our powerlessness"	41
<b>Part 5</b> "the problem of the 3 per cent mouse and the 97 per cent elephant"	53
<b>Part 6</b> helping is not always helpful	63
<b>Part 7</b> a 60,000 year old church?	75
<b>Part 8</b> what is land for?	87
<b>Conclusion</b>	97
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	101
<b>Appendix 1</b> – The constitutional recognition context	102
<b>Appendix 2</b> – The Anglican Church's response	106







**“Australia Day – Celebrating An Imposter.”**

*Acrylic on canvas, 2018*

I did this painting in the midst of the debate about changing the date for Australia day. It consists of over 25,000 single brown dots that represent the more than 65,000 Aboriginal people in Queensland alone who lost their lives in the frontier wars. Its background is a combination of orange and purple, the colour of country and the colour of sovereignty. Despite the attempts to impose religion, technology, culture and sport on this land, it still remains the sovereign home of those who went before, those who are here now and those yet to come.

# INTRODUCTION

## A VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

# In May 2017 something new and important happened.



As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,  
‘See, I am sending my messenger  
ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
“Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight”’

Mark 1: 2-3 NRSV<sup>1</sup>



Woe to any age in which the voice  
crying in the wilderness can no longer be  
heard because the noises of everyday life  
drown it – or restrictions forbid it – or it is  
lost in the hurry and turmoil of “progress” –  
or simply stifled by authority, misled by fear  
and cowardice.

**Father Alfred Delp S.J.**  
***Prison Writings***

Our original Constitution, the document  
that sets out how power works in Australia,  
came into force on 1 January 1901.

First Nations people were not consulted  
about it.

Not surprisingly, it was a document that  
both excluded them and enabled their  
exploitation.

In 1967 two discriminatory provisions  
were removed by referendum. However  
there are still controversial references to  
race in the Constitution and there is no  
overt inclusion of First Nations people  
and their long history and connection  
with this country.

There has been much talk about  
rectifying this.

During 2016-7, there were 12 separate  
regional consultations, which sent  
delegates and ideas to the First Nations

National Constitutional Convention at  
Uluru in May 2017.

It was the most extensive consultation  
of Indigenous people ever and the first  
time such a substantial group from so  
many different places came together to  
state what they wanted.

They said, in a page, what they wanted.

**On 26 May 2017, Australia was gifted  
with the *Statement from the Heart*.**

It speaks into the stories we tell to  
explain who we are and how we live  
and what we do.

That is, it speaks into our theology.

This 8-part study comes out of the  
theological questions it raises.

I am sometimes asked about First  
Nations people because of where I live  
and what I do.

The question is often phrased:

*“So, how do we solve ‘the  
Aboriginal problem?’”*

My mind turns to a quote by the African  
American comedian Chris Rock:

Here's the thing. When we talk about race relations in America or racial progress, it's all nonsense. There are no race relations.

White people were crazy. Now they're not as crazy. To say that black people have made progress would be to say they deserve what happened to them before. So, to say Obama is progress is saying that he's the first black person that is qualified to be president. That's not black progress. That's white progress. There's been black people qualified to be president for hundreds of years... my kids are smart, educated, beautiful, polite children. There have been smart, educated, beautiful, polite black children for hundreds of years. The advantage that my children have is that my children are encountering the nicest white people that America has ever produced. Let's hope America keeps producing nicer white people.

**Chris Rock<sup>2</sup>**

This resource is not about how we solve 'the Aboriginal problem'.<sup>3</sup>

I believe listening to the *Statement from the Heart* reveals a lot about what is actually going on in Australia.

If we listen only to people like us, then our way of seeing the world is reinforced.

The general form of propositions is "This is how things are", - That is the kind of proposition one repeats to oneself countless times. One thinks that one is treating the outline of the thing's nature over and over again, and one is merely tracing round the frame through which we look at it.

**Ludwig Wittgenstein**  
***Philosophical Investigations***

Listening to the other isn't comfortable. It risks shattering boundaries and ideas that keep us safe and make the world predictable and secure for us and those we love.

But listening helps us to see our country, and ourselves, more clearly.

Not everything that is faced can be changed.  
But nothing can be changed until it is faced.

**James Baldwin**  
***As Much Truth As One Can Bear<sup>4</sup>***

So the first question isn't do I agree or disagree with the Statement right now.

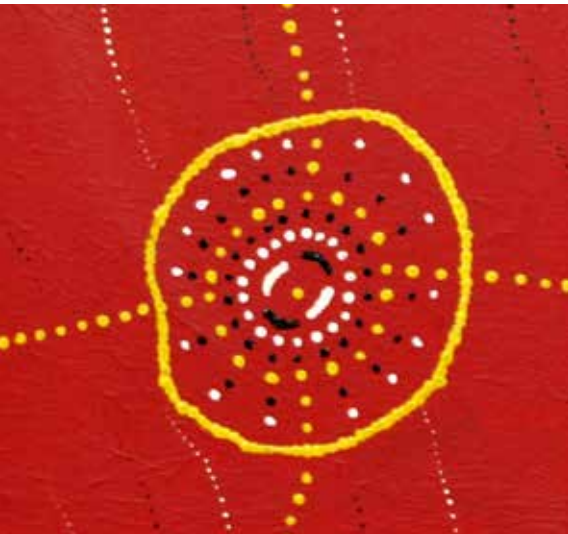
It is whether I want to stay with it long enough to allow the encounter with it to change me.

We have to fight for black and white. Mabo said to his son – let's fight for black and white. His son asked, but why are we fighting for whitefellas? And Mabo said, because they are blindfolded; we need to open their eyes and let them realise that we were in this country before them.

**Darwin Consultation**  
***Our Story***  
***Final Report of the Referendum Council***



# the Statement from the Heart



We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is *a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.* It has never

been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is *the torment of our powerlessness.*

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country. When we

have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: *the coming together after a struggle.* It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.



# What to do

## Read the *Statement from the Heart*.

On 30 July 2017 the Referendum Council, who organised the consultations, issued the *Final Report of the Referendum Council*, which recommended adopting the recommendations in the *Statement from the Heart*.

Their report included **Our Story**; a vivid summary of the 12 Regional Dialogues.

(Scroll down a bit to find it at 2.2.1)

Consider reading this also.

*Our Story* and the *Final Report of the Referendum Council* are cited throughout these studies.

This 8-part Study Guide is designed to take you through themes arising from *Statement from the Heart*.

The depth of content means it is best used over an 8-week period (or at a pace that suits the particular group).

The material is suitable for individual reflection or for a group study; each part contains Art, Stories, Quotes, Scripture, Questions and a Prayer.

There are additional resources at the end of each Part for those who would like to 'Go Deeper'.

This is not an easy Study because the material is confronting.

The *Statement from the Heart* throws up difficult questions and this Study does not attempt to give definitive answers or a conclusive church response.

My hope instead is that it will open up conversations about a Christian response to our history and present situation.

I have found grappling with the *Statement from the Heart* to be challenging but deeply worthwhile.

I believe it helps us hear God's voice in Australia at this time and may show the way to becoming a truly Australian church.

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1 All Scripture readings are taken from the New Revised Standard Version Bible: Anglicized Edition, copyright © 1989, 1995 National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America.

2 <http://www.vulture.com/2014/11/chris-rock-frank-rich-in-conversation.html>

3 I am indebted to Veronica Brady's discussion of the issues with talking about 'the Aboriginal problem' and her use of the Wittgenstein quote in this context in *Can These Bones Live* (and generally this book has been very influential on this Study Guide).

4 "The New York Times Book Review (14 January 1962)









**“The Temptation at Cook’s Gap.”**

*Acrylic on canvas, 2017*

My father faced the temptation to be equal with his white neighbours. Somewhere around 1967 my father and mother developed a basic business plan to purchase the small farm and post office in Cook’s Gap. He was an exemplary farmer and she a resourceful seamstress and manager. They believed that this would give them the opportunity of equality and set up a better life for their boys.

Dressed in their Sunday best they went to see the local bank manager, someone he played cricket with, only to be told no. He walked out of the Bank and across the road to the pub and our lives changed dramatically.

*The Temptation of Jesus: Matthew 4:1-11*

PART 1

THE DOCTRINE OF DISCOVERY

# On May 27 1967, Australians voted to remove part of the Australian Constitution that treated Indigenous Australians as inferior to non-Indigenous Australians:

*In reckoning the numbers of the people of the Commonwealth, or of a State or other part of the Commonwealth, aboriginal natives should not be counted.*

**Section 127 of the Australian Constitution  
(Removed by the 1967 Referendum)**

In 1967 we were counted,  
in 2017 we seek to be heard.

**Statement from the Heart**

I guess our country owes its existence to a form of foreign investment by the British government in the then unsettled or, scarcely settled, great southern land.

**Prime Minister Tony Abbott  
Keynote Address to the Australia-  
Melbourne Institute Conference 2014<sup>5</sup>**

## STORY

In July 2014, a statue of John McDouall Stuart appeared in an Alice Springs park where many First Nations people hang out.

He is very bronze and very tall and is carrying a huge rifle.

The statue was gifted to the Town Council by local Freemasons.

(John Stuart was a Freemason.)

It had not gone through Council processes for approving public monuments. However, after a public fight, it ended up displayed anyway.

The statue's inscription reads in part:

***John McDouall Stuart and his companions were the first Europeans to pass through this region, going on to discover the centre of Australia in April 1860.***

There were, of course, people already living in the centre of Australia in April 1860. They had been living in the centre of Australia for a long, long time.

Chances are, their descendants wander past the statue most days.

So what is meant by 'discover' here?

Participants expressed disgust about a statue of John McDouall Stuart being erected in Alice Springs following the 150th anniversary of his successful attempt to reach the top end. This expedition led to the opening up of the "South Australian frontier" which led to massacres as the telegraph line was established and white settlers moved into the region. People feel sad whenever they see the statue; its presence and the fact that Stuart is holding a gun is disrespectful to the Aboriginal community who are descendants of the families slaughtered during the massacres throughout central Australia.

**Ross River Consultation  
Our Story  
Final Report of the Referendum Council**

Cook did not discover us, because we saw him. We were telling each other with smoke, yet in his diary, he said "discovered".

**Torres Strait Consultation  
Our Story  
Final Report of the Referendum Council**

Built a large cone of stones, in the centre of which I placed a pole with the British flag nailed to it. Near the top of the cone I placed a small bottle, in which there is a slip of paper, with our signatures to it, stating by whom it was raised. We then gave three hearty cheers for the flag, the emblem of civil and religious liberty, and may it be a sign to the natives that the dawn of liberty, civilization and Christianity is about to break upon them.

**Journals of John McDouall Stuart  
23 April, 1860  
Describing his actions at the top of what is now known as Central Mount Stuart<sup>6</sup>**



Indeed, we live as human beings, but we do not wage war according to human standards; for the weapons of our warfare are not merely human, but they have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to obey Christ.

**2 Corinthians 10: 2-5**

Strongholds are habits of thinking that hurt people - that create division between people. The doctrine of discovery is one of those strongholds.

**Bishop Mark McDonald**  
*National Indigenous Anglican Bishop of the Anglican Church of Canada*

WATCH<sup>7</sup>

READ<sup>8</sup>

## DISCUSSION

At the heart of the doctrine of discovery is the idea that Indigenous people are a primitive form of human life and therefore discoverable.

**Bishop Mark McDonald**<sup>9</sup>

The use of the word 'discover' makes it very clear who our point of reference is.

And who it is not.

We don't 'discover' our sort of people, usually. We meet them.

And we don't 'discover' their homes or properties. We visit them. Because we recognise that another human owns them already.

This is not a neutral issue for the Christian church.

Pope Alexander used the doctrine of discovery in 1493 to justify the Spanish conquest of the New World.

He issued a Papal Bull that said that any lands not inhabited by Christians were available to be 'discovered', claimed and

the rulership taken over in order that 'barbarous nations be overthrown and brought to the faith itself'.<sup>10</sup>

This doctrine became the basis for Europe's claims in America, and the US Supreme Court used it to justify American Expansion into the West.

That is, Protestants also used whether people were 'Christian' or not to decide whether they had a right to their lands.

In Australia it appeared in the guise of *terra nullius* - a Latin expression that means *nobody's land*.<sup>11</sup>

This has been called 'a morphed and more extreme version of the doctrine of discovery'.<sup>12</sup>

We learned that their law told them a story called *terra nullius*, which meant that if you go to a land where the people don't look like you or live like you, you can pretend they don't exist and take their land.

**Dr Galarrwuy Yunupingu**<sup>13</sup>

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. 'Teacher,' he said, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?' He said to him, 'What is written in the law? What do you read there?' He answered, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.' And he said to him, 'You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.'

But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, 'And who is my neighbour?' Jesus replied, 'A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, "Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend." Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?' He said, 'The one who showed him mercy.' Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise.'

**Luke 10: 25-37**



## DISCUSSION

We have placed ourselves in a position that has compelled the Aborigines to become our neighbours and we have worked ill toward our neighbours...

***1838 Report of Lancelot Threlkeld  
Missionary for the London Missionary  
Society on the shores of Lake  
Macquarie, Newcastle<sup>14</sup>***

The Colonisers believed in loving the neighbour as the self.

Treating Indigenous people badly jeopardised people's conception of themselves as good.

This sort of cognitive dissonance has long been resolved by putting some humans outside the realm of people whose suffering we have to care about.

The Romans were not without any moral feelings. They showed a high regard for justice, public duty, and even kindness to others. What the [bloody gladiatorial] games show, with hideous clarity is that there was a sharp limit to these moral feelings. If a being came within this limit, activities [that] occurred at the games would have been an intolerable outrage; when a being was outside the sphere of moral concern, however, the infliction of suffering was merely entertaining. Some human beings—criminals and military captives especially—and all animals fell outside this sphere.

***Peter Singer  
Animal Liberation***



The lawyer who questioned Jesus was doing the same thing.

‘You have to love your neighbour as yourself’, you can hear him thinking, ‘not everyone.’

And, lawyerlike, the issue is where is the line?

This is a reasonable question. We are limited. Day to day we do have to delineate what we can care about.

Jesus’ answer smashed the use of race or religion as that line.

For much of Australia’s history, however, race was overtly used in this way.

I do not think either that the doctrine of the equality of man was really ever intended to include racial equality. There is no racial equality. There is that basic inequality. These races are in comparison with white races – I think no one wants convincing of this fact – unequal and inferior.

**Sir Edmund Barton**  
**Prime Minister of Australia**  
**26 September 1901**<sup>15</sup>

Many Colonists believed they were superior to First Nations people, who were such lesser humans that really they were more in the category of animals.

It was maintained by many of the colony that the blacks had no language at all but were only a race of the monkey tribe. This was a convenient assumption, for if it could be proved that the Aborigines...were only a species of wild beasts, there could be no guilt attributed to those who shot them or poisoned them.

**Lancelot Threlkeld**  
***Australian Reminiscences and Papers***  
***of L.E. Threlkeld, Missionary to the***  
***Aborigines, 1824-1859***

Because the primitive lords of the soil interfere, in some of the frontier stations, with the easy and lucrative grazing of cattle and sheep, they are felt by the sensitive pockets of the graziers to be a nuisance; and the best pleas that these “gentlemen” can set up for their rights to abuse the nuisance by the summary processes of stabbing, burning and poisoning, is that the offenders are below the level of the white man’s species.

**Editorial**  
***The Colonist***  
**16 January 1839**

Early last century, Alfred Canning built the Canning Stock Route through deserts in the West. He captured and chained indigenous people and gave them only salt water to drink until, driven mad by thirst, they led him to their sacred waterholes, which were then taken for cattle.<sup>16</sup>

For most of Colonial history, well into last century, the consequences for an Indigenous person who killed a whitefella’s cow were harsher than for a whitefella who killed an Indigenous person.

As the Kimberley Land Council recently remarked ‘the fact that people are more important than cattle is something the gadiya [whitefellas] find very hard to accept’.<sup>17</sup>





## QUESTIONS

Rhetoric that makes one lot of people less human than another lot of people is an alarming precursor to untold woe.

We face the urgent call to eliminate every stereotype discrimination that reduces- and denies – [the image of God] in the other. It was the ability to distinguish some people as human and others as not that enabled the Nazis to segregate and then destroy the “subhumans” (Jews, Gypsies, Slavs). The ability to differentiate the foreign Jews from French-born Jews paved the way for the deportation first of foreign-born, then of native, French Jews. This differentiation stilled conscience, stilled the church, stilled even some French Jews. The indivisibility of human dignity and equality becomes an essential bulwark against the repetition of another Holocaust. It is the command rising out of Auschwitz.

**Rabbi Irving Greenburg**  
*Cloud of Smoke, Pillar of Fire: Judaism, Christianity and Modernity after the Holocaust*<sup>18</sup>

It came up again at the start of the Rwandan genocide<sup>19</sup> and it was used recently in Britain about refugees.<sup>20</sup>

Have you heard the sort of rhetoric that treats First Nations people as lesser humans? As more like children? Or animals?

What is a theological response to the claim one group of humans is lesser than another?

Why is it such a persistent idea?

Where do you have a tendency to draw lines putting some humans outside your sphere of moral concern?





## PRAY

Holy Father, God of Love,  
You are the Creator of all things.

We acknowledge the pain and shame of  
our history  
and the sufferings of Our peoples,  
and we ask your forgiveness.  
We thank you for the survival of  
Indigenous cultures

Our hope is in you because you gave  
your Son Jesus  
to reconcile the world to you.  
We pray for your strength and grace to  
forgive, accept and love one another, as  
you love us and forgive  
and accept us in the sacrifice of your Son.

Give us the courage to accept the  
realities of our history so that we may  
build a better future for our Nation.  
Teach us to respect all cultures.  
Teach us to care for our land and waters.

Help us to share justly the resources of  
this land. Help us to bring about spiritual  
and social change to improve the quality  
of life for all groups in our communities,  
especially the disadvantaged.

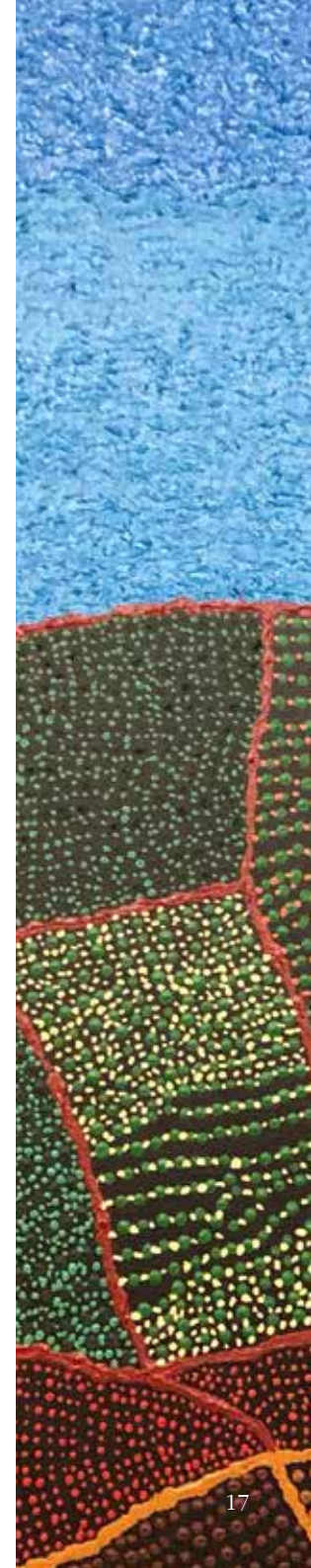
Help young people to find true dignity  
and self-esteem by your Spirit.

May your power and love be the  
foundations on which we build our  
families, our communities and our  
Nation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

***Prayer from the Wontulp-Bi-Buya  
Indigenous Theology Working Group,***

***13 March 1997***

***Used by the Anglican Primate of  
Australia, Melbourne Archbishop  
Philip Freier to commence his  
address to General Synod, 2017***



## GO DEEPER

They thought they'd pick a supposedly uninhabited spot out in the Australian desert.  
Only they got it wrong.  
There were people here.

**Robin Matthews**  
**Caretaker of the Maralinga**  
**Nuclear Test Site**<sup>21</sup>

British Nuclear testing was conducted at Maralinga in South Australia from 1956 to 1963. Seven bombs, with a combined strength greater than the Hiroshima explosion, were dropped, followed by a series of smaller tests. Indigenous residents were exposed to the radiation and the site was left contaminated with radioactive material.

Eventually political pressure led to the 1985 McClelland Royal Commission. The findings included:

*Overall, the attempts to ensure Aboriginal safety during the [Maralinga tests] demonstrate ignorance, incompetence and cynicism on the part of those responsible for that safety...*

*[A] site was chosen on the false assumption that the area was not used by its traditional Aboriginal owners. Aborigines continued to move around and through the Protection zone and inadequate resources were allocated to locating them and to ensuring their safety. The reporting of sightings of Aboriginal people was discouraged and ignored...*

*The affairs of a handful of natives counted little compared to the interests of the British Commonwealth of Nations.*

Then Prime Minister Robert Menzies gave the go ahead for the testing. It was done with extreme secrecy. He did not ask for any scientific evidence.<sup>22</sup> He did not consult, not even with his own Cabinet.<sup>23</sup>

It is hard to escape the conclusion that he did not give serious thought to the consequences because the people likely to be affected just didn't count very much.

**Listen** to Yami Lester describe what it was like:

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2011-09-27/yami-lester/6178744>

**Read** more about what happened at Maralinga:

<https://theconversation.com/sixty-years-on-the-maralinga-bomb-tests-remind-us-not-to-put-security-over-safety-62441>

<http://blackmistburntcountry.com.au/index.php/resources/history/>

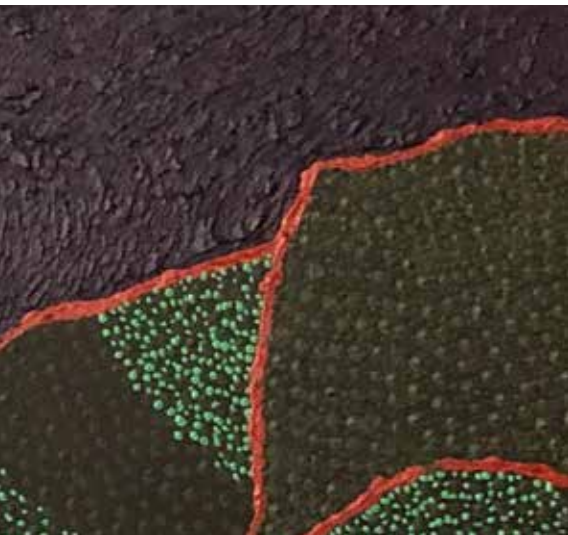
<https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/history/maralinga-how-british-nuclear-tests-changed-history-forever>

**OR**

**When the Heart Cracks Open**

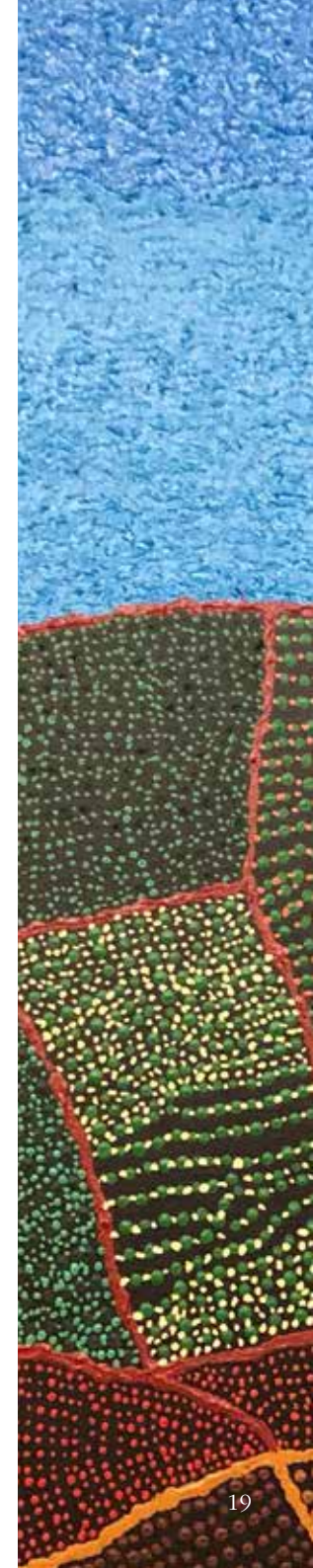
The Rev Dr Sarah Bachelard

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gesk9E96zQg&feature=youtu.be>





- 5 <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/tony-abbott-says-australia-benefited-from-foreign-investment-because-it-was-unsettled-before-the-british-20140703-zsvby.html>
- 6 Further reading on this statue at <https://griffithreview.com/articles/icons-living-and-dead/>
- 7 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ygk3X5Xjih4>
- 8 <http://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015-08-18-MacDonald.pdf>
- 9 <https://adelaideanglicans.com/stories/2017/10/time-to-confront-the-doctrine-of-discovery>
- 10 Papal Bull issued by Pope Alexander VI on May 4, 1493 <https://www.gilderlehrman.org/sites/default/files/inline-pdfs/T-04093.pdf>
- 11 This term was used in the Papal Bull Terra Nullius of 1095 which gave European kings the right to discover and claim land in non-Christian areas.
- 12 <http://www.als.org.au/the-doctrine-of-discovery/>
- 13 [https://app.lms.unimelb.edu.au/bbcswebdav/courses/166392\\_2009\\_1/G.Yunupingu.doc](https://app.lms.unimelb.edu.au/bbcswebdav/courses/166392_2009_1/G.Yunupingu.doc)
- 14 N. Gunson (ed.), Australian Reminiscences and Letters of L. E. Threlkeld, Vol. 1, Canberra: AIATSIS, 1974, p. 714
- 15 House of Representatives Speech in favour of the Immigration Restriction Bill. PM Barton is speaking specifically about the inferiority of Chinese people here.
- 16 <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/postcolonial-blog/2015/sep/05/a-dark-chapter-of-history-is-tied-up-in-the-name-of-the-canning-electorate>  
See also [http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/yiwarra\\_kuju/essays/of\\_mining\\_and\\_meat/questionable\\_methods](http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/yiwarra_kuju/essays/of_mining_and_meat/questionable_methods)
- 17 The Crocodile Hole Report, Kimberley Land Council and Waringarri Resource Centre, 1991, <http://www.jawun.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/15-Crocodile-Hole-Report-1991.pdf>
- 18 <http://rabbiirvinggreenberg.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Cloud-of-Smoke-red.pdf>
- 19 Tutsi people were repeatedly referred to as 'cockroaches' in the lead up to the genocide, see <http://www.newtimes.co.rw/section/read/73836>
- 20 In 2015 PM David Cameron referred to a 'swarm' of migrants trying to get access to Britain, see <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2015-07-31/david-cameron-under-fire-for-describing-migrants-as-a-swarm/6661790>
- 21 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-australia-30640338>
- 22 Findings of the McClelland Royal Commission
- 23 Findings of the McClelland Royal Commission









**“From The Depth, Life Rises.”**

*Acrylic on canvas*

Despite the destruction of Aboriginal life, culture and language, it has arisen once again. The colours in this painting refer to the dominance of the colonial culture (red, white and blue) which has found Aboriginal life and culture (purple, yellow and green) returning from the centre to wander right across the landscape of Australia. This is resurrection. What had been thought to have been destroyed, returns.

*Resurrection: Mark 16, Matthew 28, Luke 24*

PART 2  
LUCKY FOR WHO?

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

***Statement from the Heart***

The words 'settlement' and 'invasion' are highly charged for both sides of this historic encounter, but there is no use denying these two perspectives. It is understandable why some Australians speak of settlement, and why some speak of invasion. The maturation of Australia will be marked by our ability to understand both perspectives.

***Final Report Referendum Council***

Australia must acknowledge its history, its true history. Not Captain Cook.  
What happened all across Australia: the massacres and the wars. If that were taught in schools, we might have one nation, where we are all together.

***Darwin Consultation  
Our Story  
Final Report of the Referendum Council***

## STORY 1

As I have got older I have become very interested in my own family story.

It turns out, like in most families, some of the most difficult things are not talked about.

A weighty family book bound in rich leather with swirling front pieces was written about one side.

Later it was revealed that an ancestor had been omitted.

He was a horse thief in Scotland and had been sent over as a convict.

The writer left it out as a kindness to two members of the older generation who would have considered it shameful.

Now they are no longer with us, the horse-thieving convict is back in.

There was a very charismatic figure on the other side a few generations back. People still come up to me to talk about having heard him speak.

He was a warm man. He was also a philanderer and a fraudster.



A family member wrote a small book about him also.

It mentioned neither of these, expect perhaps in an oblique descriptor of him as a 'man's man'.

## QUESTIONS

Have there been shameful things covered up in your own family tree?

Why do we do this?

Does it matter to you that your ancestors behaved well?

Why? Or why not?

Why is it so hard for many of us to talk about this?

## POEM

### Pinjarra

I heard the whispering through the trees  
It was the whispers of old women  
It was concern.

I heard the shouting  
above me, around me, in me.  
It was the shouting of old men, young men  
It was fear.

I heard the sighing  
floating, hanging in the air.  
It was the sighing of young women  
It was despair.

I heard the crying of the children  
girls and boys  
It was the crying that comes with destruction  
It was the cry of war.

If you walk through this country  
anytime  
anywhere  
You will hear these sounds,  
if you care.

***Sue Jean Stanton***



## DISCUSSION

The anthropologist W.E.H Stanner talked about 'the great Australian silence' in his 1968 Boyer Lectures. He listed a number of Australian history books written between 1939 and 1955, pointing to their minimal focus on First Nations history, and continued:

*I need not extend the list. A partial survey is enough to let me make the point that inattention on such a scale cannot possibly be explained by absent-mindedness. It is a structural matter, a view from a window which has been carefully placed to exclude a whole quadrant of the landscape. What may well have begun as a simple forgetting of other possible views turned under habit and over time into something like a cult of forgetfulness practised on a national scale. We have been able for so long to disremember the aborigines that we are now hard put to keep them in mind even when we most want to do so.*

**W.E.H Stanner**  
**Second Boyer Lecture**

Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?"

Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

Pilate asked him, "What is truth?"

**John 18:37-8**

However, beware! Whenever people wonder 'What is the truth?' usually it is because the truth is just under their nose - but it would be very inconvenient to acknowledge it. And thus, against his own better judgement, Pilate yields to the will of the crowd and lets Jesus be crucified.

Pilate's problem was not how to ascertain Jesus' innocence. This was easy enough: it was obvious. No, the real problem was that, in the end - like all of us, most of the time - he found it more expedient to wash his hands of the truth.

**Simon Leys**  
**Lies that tell the truth<sup>24</sup>**

Today, it seems to me increasingly the point at which we, as a people, invaders of the ancient land and intruders upon its culture, are challenged to come to terms with our actual situation as distinct from the one we would like to imagine for ourselves. For that, of course, we have to be prepared to see through our illusions and let them go. We need to be able to stand in the truth, to have a way of describing ourselves and the world which actually fits.

**Veronica Brady**  
**Caught in the Draught: Essays on Contemporary Australian Culture and Society**

## DISCUSSION

There were 12 First Nations regional dialogues held around Australia in 2016 and 2017 in the lead up to the Constitutional Convention at Uluru.

This desire for *truth-telling about our history* was unanimous at every Dialogue.

This was particularly significant because it wasn't in the Referendum Council Discussion paper that went out to the dialogues.

It arose afresh out of each of the 12 discussions because it is something First Nations peoples across Australia really want.

And no wonder.

We are a society that struggles with truth-telling.

We go for what is polite or what is persuasive or what creates the best image to achieve our purpose.

That is, we value expedience and reputational management over truth.

We do it to what is happening now. We call it Public Relations (or PR).

We do it to history as well.

The story of our history isn't irrelevant. It matters. You can tell how much it matters by the intensity of our struggles over it.

**Our history shapes  
who we think we are  
and how we think  
we should live.**

That is, it shapes our theology.

Anglicans are entirely embedded in recent Australian history. An Anglican chaplain came over on the first fleet and Anglicans have been active across Australian society ever since.

Anglicans were the pastoralists and governors and newspaper proprietors and miners and missionaries and Protectors and advocates and First Nations peoples.

We are part of the good of it. We are part of the woe of it.

We can't understand ourselves, or our mission, without understanding it.

So what is true in our history is no small question.

It goes to the heart of what it is to be Christian, and Anglican, in this land.

## QUESTIONS

Are truthfulness and sincerity the same thing?

Do the institutions you work for prioritise telling the truth? Does your family? What about your church?

What would it look like to be a person or a church that was known for telling the truth?

The awful but surely undeniable fact of Aboriginal history, the one fact which transcends all other facts and all other estimates, reconstructions, analyses, guesses, misrepresentations, truths, half-truths and lies, is the fact of the immense and appalling reduction in the Aboriginal population during the first 150 years of European settlement.

**John Harris**  
***Hiding the bodies: the myth of  
the humane colonisation of  
Aboriginal Australia***<sup>25</sup>

In 1788 there were, as far as we can calculate, 350,000 Aborigines in Australia. There are now only 50,000 full-bloods. The cause of this decrease is quite clear, namely, we white Australians, Christian and civilized.

**Professor A. P. Elkin**  
***The Original Australians***  
***Pamphlet for the Australian Board of  
Missions (in circulation in the 1950s)***





Early population estimates for the whole of Australia before European colonisation was about 300,000. More recent estimates suggest at least 750,000 and probably one million. The Australian Bureau of Statistics estimated it to have plummeted to 31,000 by 1911, the lowest level suggested. These figures suggest a depopulation of perhaps 90 per cent, or even 97 per cent. If the population estimates were accepted conservatively as reducing from 750,000 to 100,000, a depopulation of 87 per cent would be indicated. More detailed studies support such human devastation. One estimate is that the population decline in Tasmania in thirty years was 96 per cent; in Victoria, at least 90 per cent in thirty-five years; on Victoria River Downs approximately 90 per cent in sixty years; and perhaps 97 per cent in the Alligator River district.

**Noel Loos**

***White Christ Black Cross:  
The emergence of a Black church***

For the Lord comes out from his place  
to punish the inhabitants of the earth for  
their iniquity;  
the earth will disclose the blood shed on it,  
and will no longer cover its slain.

**Isaiah 26:19**

## DISCUSSION

There was a view in the 19th century that First Nations people started to vanish at the same time new people appeared who wanted their land in a staggering coincidence; convenient to the colonists but completely unattributable to them.

John Harris writes that there were 'no shortage of metaphorical euphemisms: the blacks were 'fading away' 'fading out', 'decaying', 'slipping from life's platform', 'melting away like the snow from the mountains at the approach from spring', 'perishing as does the autumnal grass before the bush fires' and so on.<sup>26</sup>

Captain J.L. Stokes who visited in 1846 observed that the colonists were mostly willing to 'content themselves with the belief that the imminent disappearance of the Aborigines was 'in accordance with some mysterious dispensation of Providence''.<sup>27</sup>

[A]s a Christian and a civilised people it was not easy for the British settlers to acknowledge what they had done. Stanner was fascinated by the other very common 19th century belief, captured in the line of Percy Russell's poem – 'Her shield unsullied by a single crime' – that in the birth of the Australian nation no sin had been committed. Rather than acknowledge complicity in the destruction of Aboriginal society and consequent remorse, it was far easier for Australians either to avert their gaze – 'sightlessness' was one of Stanner's favourite words – or to claim, as had the Reverend G. A. Wood, 'that the cause of the extinction lies in the savage himself and ought not to be attributed to the white man'.

**Robert Mammé**

***Introduction to The Dreaming & Other  
Essays: W.E.H. Stanner***





This sort of thinking is still around.

It is implicit in the term 'lucky country' as though modern Australia with all her vast mineral and land resources, just sort of fell into its citizens hands.

Colonization was violent.

It is hard to know numbers, because almost all the deaths were not investigated, but a recent paper estimated some 60 000 First Nations people were killed on the Queensland frontier.<sup>28</sup> This is about the same as the number of Australians who died in WWI.<sup>29</sup>

The pre-contact population of Tasmanian Aborigines is widely debated and recent estimates are in the order of 4000.<sup>30</sup> These people were almost, but not completely, wiped out by the 1830s by disease, violence and infertility.<sup>31</sup>

The Black War was the name Colonists gave to their violent struggle with First Nations people in Eastern Tasmania in the 1820s in which they killed the majority of those still remaining, and also suffered significant casualties themselves.<sup>32</sup>

There was official policy, and there was what actually allowed or encouraged to occur at the frontier.

Around Australia First Nations people were ill-treated. Some were shot. Some were tortured. Flour and waterholes were poisoned.

Colonists ejected First Nations people from their land and water. They had a choice of starving to death or risking being shot for 'theft' from Colonists' land. Many ended up with nowhere at all to go.<sup>33</sup>

There was widespread abuse of First Nations women and children (as well as consensual relationships), which led to venereal disease causing infertility.<sup>34 35</sup>

Many First Nations people died from other epidemic diseases (such as smallpox, influenza and measles) brought over by the colonists.

I have heard it said that this part was a sort of bad luck but nobody's fault really.

It is more complex than that. It is true that once the diseases were here some of this could not have been prevented as epidemics to which people had

no immunity raged through local populations.<sup>36</sup>

However, especially as time went on, the wretched living conditions people were forced into also contributed to the spread and fatality of disease.<sup>37 38</sup>

That they must die out is, I think, a foregone conclusion. Were they as valuable commercially as short-horned cattle, or merino sheep, there would be no fear of their dying out. The fact is we have pretended but never really wished to save them from extermination.

**Edward M. Curr**  
**1877 Royal Commission on the Aborigines**  
**(An Australian pastoralist and Squatter)**<sup>39</sup>



## DISCUSSION

But I think of a people crucified -  
The real Australian story

**Jack Davis**  
***Aboriginal Australia***<sup>40</sup>

Once people die, their voice is lost, any children they would have had are not born, and they are wiped from history.

History is written by the victor after all.

Except in Christianity where someone who was killed spoke again and it changed the world.

As Christians we don't believe the earthly victor is necessarily right.

We don't believe that death is the end

We don't believe the voices of the dead don't matter.

In theological terms we believe that 'blood cries out from the earth' (Genesis 4:10).

Death does not end relationships between human persons and between human persons and God; and this may be sobering news as well as joyful, sobering especially for an empire with blood on its hands.

**Rowan Williams**  
***Archbishop of Canterbury's***  
***Easter Sermon, 2004***<sup>41</sup>

No matter what benefits colonisation brought it effectively caused the death of the majority of people who were living here already.

## QUESTIONS

What do we make of these deaths?

Where is Christ in this part of our history?

## TO DO

More Australians can name a horse that ran faster than can name any First Nations folk who stood up for their people.

What are the Australian historical names you know?

What sort of people are they?

Who are the heroes? Who are the villains?

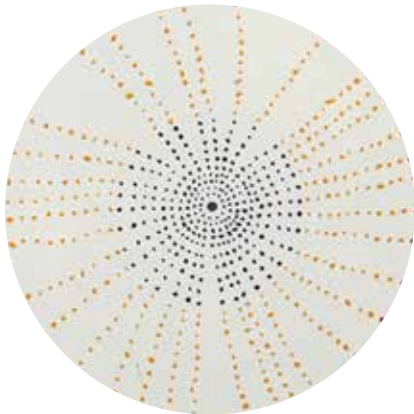
Everywhere across Australia, great warriors like Pemulwuy and Jandamarra led resistance against the British. First Nations refused to acquiesce to dispossession and fought for their sovereign rights and their land.

***Our Story***  
***Final Report of the Referendum Council***

Look up Pemulwuy or Jandamarra.

Find out everything you can about who they were and what they did.





## PRAY

### Aboriginal Thanksgiving Prayer

God of Holy Dreaming, Great Creator Spirit, from the dawn of creation you have given your children the good things of Mother Earth.

You spoke and the gum tree grew.

In the vast desert and the dense forest, and in the cities and at the water's edge, creation sings your praise.

Your presence endures at the rock at the heart of our Land.

When Jesus hung on the tree you heard the cries of all your people and became one with your wounded ones: the convicts, the hunted, the dispossessed.

The sunrise of your Son coloured the earth anew, and bathed it in glorious hope.

In Jesus we have been reconciled to you, to each other and to your whole creation.

Lead us on, Great Spirit, as we gather from the four corners of the earth; enable us to walk together in trust from the hurt and shame of the past into the full day which has dawned in Jesus Christ.

Amen.

***The Reverend Lenore Parker***  
***Life Member of the National Aboriginal and***  
***Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council (NATSIAC)***  
***A Prayer Book for Australia***

## GO DEEPER

Professor Lyndall Ryan from the University of Newcastle has embarked on a project to document Colonial Frontier Massacres in Eastern Australia from 1788-1872.

### **You can read about it at:**

<https://www.newcastle.edu.au/newsroom/featured-news/mapping-the-massacres-of-australias-colonial-frontier>

### **The map itself (and further information about the project) is at:**

<https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>



24 <https://www.themonthly.com.au/node/710/page/4>

25 <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p73641/pdf/ch0550.pdf>

26 John Harris, *One Blood*.

27 John Harris, *One Blood*

28 Raymond Evans and R Robert Ørsted-Jensen, "I cannot say the numbers that were killed": Assessing Violent Mortality on the Queensland Frontier

29 Ibid.

30 Nicholas Clements, *Frontier Conflict in Van Diemen's land*, <https://eprints.utas.edu.au/17070/2/Whole-Clements-thesis.pdf>

31 Ibid.

32 Clements estimates of the 1000 Aborigines in the war zone at the start, 600 were killed by Colonists

33 "This situation presented many Aboriginal people with an insoluble dilemma. They actually had nowhere to go. Bishop Broughton saw this clearly in 1850, after the closure of the Church of England mission at Wellington: 'We have no place for them to flee into,' he wrote. This acute problem is rarely acknowledged or understood even by those who admit the historical truth of massacre and dispossession. It was a situation which lasted for a century in the south-eastern states." John Harris, *One Blood*

34 "It was the sexual abuse of young Aboriginal girls by white settlers, and the resulting horrifying incidence of venereal diseases, which caused the missionaries most anguish. There was scarcely a settler's hut in the district where white men, whether 'master, overseer or convict', did not retain Aboriginal women. An eight-year-old girl who came to the mission suffering from venereal disease was one of four such children kept by one stockman. It was the missionaries' public criticism of such practices, and their removal of young girls to the protection of the mission, which brought them into direct conflict with some white settlers." John Harris, *One Blood*

35 In 1845 Archbishop John Bede Polding was asked about the decrease in the Aboriginal population and said the main causes were: The aggressive mode of taking possession of their country which necessarily involves a great loss of the natives; The horrible extent to which sensual indulgence is carried out by the whites, in the abuse of females in an early period of life – mere children- who are thus made incapable of becoming the mothers of healthy offspring; The introduction of diseases for which they have no proper remedy. Cited in John Harris, *One Blood*

36 John Harris, <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p73641/pdf/ch0550.pdf>

37 Ibid.

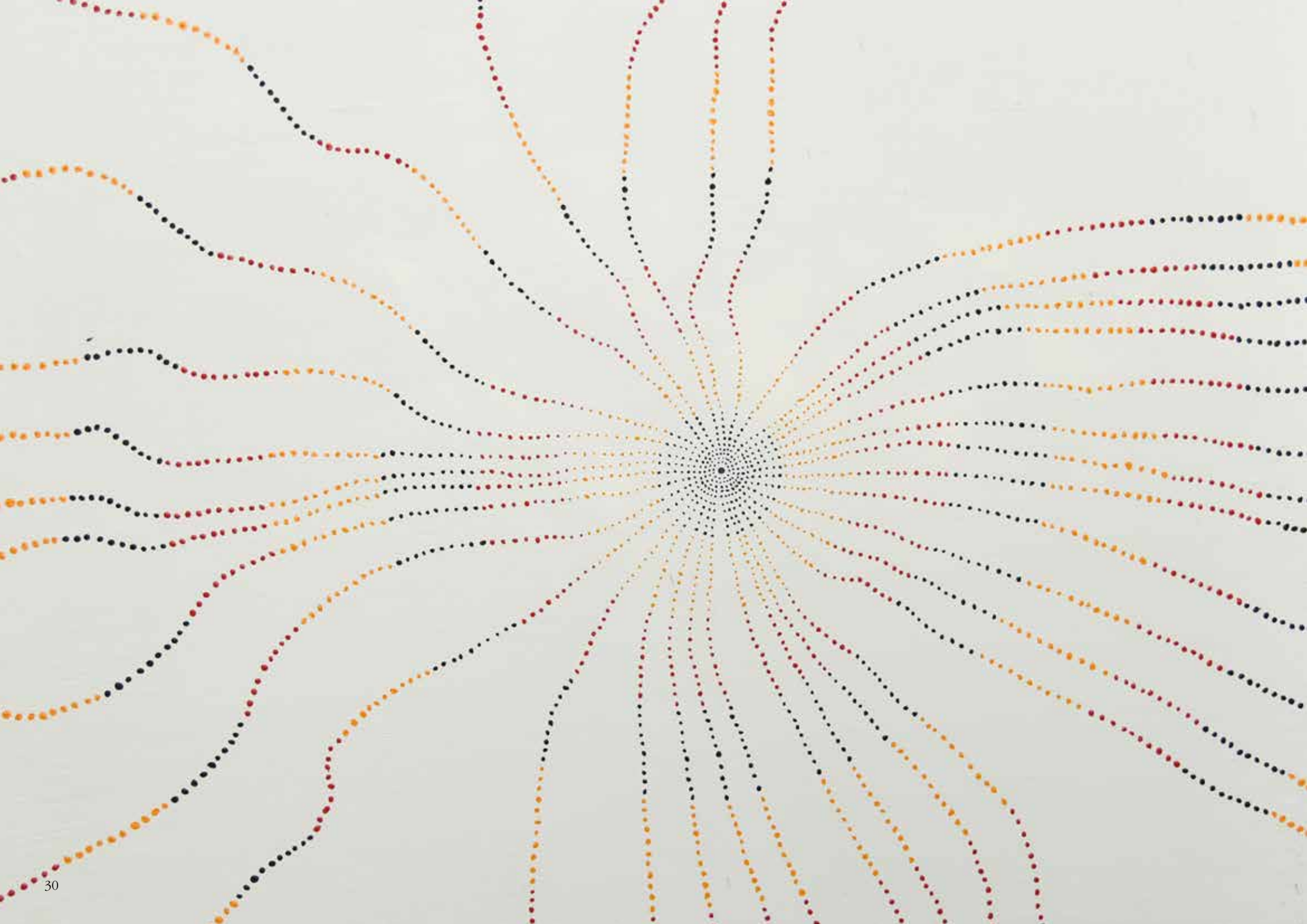
38 Chapter 2 in Noel Loos, *White Christ Black Cross: The emergence of a Black church*. See also the work of Gordon Briscoe.

39 Samuel Furphy, *Edward M. Curr and the Tide of History* <https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/aboriginal-history-monographs/edward-m-curr-and-tide-history>

40 <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/aboriginal-australia/>

41 <http://www.thinkinganglicans.org.uk/archives/000556.html>







**“From The Centre – Dadirri”**

*Acrylic on canvas*

Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr writes of Dadirri or deep listening, an indigenous way of living in harmony with country past and present. This painting takes us on a journey out from and back to the centre, the place where deep listening begins, ends and remains.

PART 3  
WE DON'T LISTEN

In 1967 we were  
counted, in 2017 we  
seek to be heard.

We call for the  
establishment of a  
First Nations Voice  
enshrined in the  
Constitution.

***Statement from the Heart***

The fact that no one *bears* what Aboriginal people are saying has been a cause of despair; it is why the gap in inequality is not closing and it highlights the exigency of reform. If the state were to hear what it is Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are saying, then we could agree to address the unresolved historical issues that continue to inform contemporary issues.

In the meantime, this passage from the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow poem is worth citing in full because it so acutely and incisively captures what is a seeming irresolvable tension between the settler and the colonised:

Ships that pass in the night,  
and speak each other in passing,  
Only a signal shown and a distant voice  
in the darkness;  
*So on the ocean of life we pass  
and speak one another,*  
Only a look and a voice, then darkness  
again and a silence.

***Professor Megan Davis***  
***Ships that Pass in the Night***<sup>42</sup>

It has seemed to me for some years that two aspects of the Aboriginal struggle have been under-valued. One is their continued will to survive, the other their continued effort to come to terms with us. There are many, perhaps too many, theories about our troubles with the Aborigines. We can spare a moment to consider *their* theory about *their* troubles with us.

***W.E.H Stanner***  
***After the Dreaming***

A few of the drinkers certainly wanted liquor to be generally available but a considerable majority wanted the permit controls. It appeared that the Liquor Commission actually wanted the [Lajamanu] community to have what is called 'a wet canteen', a community outlet for selling alcohol, which had been discussed at each meeting. At the final meeting after the community had again clearly indicated what they wanted, one of the men representing the Commission suggested to the meeting that although the community had opted for the permit system, if they wanted, they could also have a separate area in the community where a wet canteen could operate. A quite articulate Walpari man in his late thirties then said to the Commission representatives that the people had told them what they wanted but he didn't expect that they would really take any notice because that is how things always were.

***Ivan Jordan***  
***Their Way: Towards an Indigenous Walpiri Christianity***  
***(Describing events in Lajamanu in the early 1980s)***

The white bosses tended to do whatever they wanted anyway.  
It didn't matter what we said.

***Margaret Heffernan***  
***Gathering Sticks: Lighting up small fires***  
***(Margaret Heffernan is an Arrernte Elder who is describing mid 20th Century Central Australia)***



A constitutionally entrenched Voice appealed to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities because of the history of poor or non-existent consultation with communities by the Commonwealth. Consultation is either very superficial or it is more meaningful, but then wholly ignored.

For Dialogue participants, the logic of a constitutionally enshrined Voice – rather than a legislative body alone – is that it provides reassurance and recognition that this new norm of participation and consultation would be different to the practices of the past.

***Final Report of the Referendum Council***

## DISCUSSION

When the powerful act over people without listening they are effectively saying “we know better about what is good for you than you do.”

Medically, you need consent to treat another grown up.

But not to treat an animal. Or a child.

Because adults know better.

“We know better” describes most of the history of how whitefellas have treated First Nations people.

All too often they are not asked.

When they are asked, what they say is frequently ignored.

The Turnbull Government’s response to the *Statement from the Heart* continues in this long tradition.

It refuses part of what was asked for (the Constitutional voice).

And almost a year later the Government has not formally commented on the rest (the Makarrata Commission).

In March 2018, a Joint Parliamentary Select Committee was formed, another committee in a very long line of committees, to consider the issues.

The reasons given for the refusal of the Voice reveal a troubling view of what the government really meant by ‘consulting’:

The Council’s proposal for an Indigenous representative assembly, or Voice, is new to the discussion about Constitutional change, and dismissed the extensive and valuable work done over the past decade - largely with bipartisan support.

***PM’s response to the  
Statement from the Heart***<sup>43</sup>

After extensive consultation First Nations people across the country came together to say clearly, in a page, what they wanted.

What exactly does ‘consultation’ mean if those consulted are not allowed to say anything ‘new’?

It sounds a lot like what the government expected was a rubber-stamp approving what they had already decided to do.

That is, it wasn’t about listening at all.

“This was not what was asked for, or expected,” [PM Malcolm Turnbull] told the Referendum Council at a meeting in July... The country’s prime minister cannot even hear his own words. He appears incapable of understanding that he simply cannot say such words. He established an independent council to provide a report making recommendations for constitutional reform, and then he complains that this was not what he expected or asked for?

***Noel Pearson  
Betrayal***<sup>44</sup>

## QUESTIONS

Have you ever not been listened to when you said something that really mattered to you?

How did it affect you?

Have you ever found out later that you didn't listen to someone else about something that really mattered to them?

How did it affect you?

What was it that prevented you hearing?

## SCRIPTURE



### Read John 7

List out the reasons people won't listen to Jesus.

Are they the sorts of reasons we use today?

Have you ever used them yourself?

Or have they been used against you?



## STORY 1

I commented that I didn't know there were any dingo experts in London

**Lindy Chamberlain**  
***Through My Eyes***

Azaria disappeared from Uluru on the evening of 17 August 1980.

Her mother, Lindy Chamberlain, said a dingo took her.

A jury found that Lindy had murdered her baby and she was sentenced to life imprisonment in 1982.

She was released in 1988 when a Royal Commission overturned the finding but the rumours of guilt persisted until a 2012 coronial inquest, which found that Azaria died as a result of being attacked and taken by a dingo.

There was a wealth of expert evidence in the legal proceedings.

Professor Cameron, an English forensic pathologist, examined Azaria's jumpsuit, and said she had died from a cutting instrument, possibly scissors, making an

incisive wound to her neck, and that that wound was not made by dingo teeth.

Dr Sims, an English forensic odontologist, said the clothes had had none of the characteristics he would have expected to see if they had been damaged by dog teeth.

"I accept Professor Cameron and Sims' evidence as to the cause of death even though they have no specific experience with dingos. On the evidence they are experienced in their field and have considerable evidence with canines and there is no evidence before me that their evidence would be affected by lack of specific experience with dingos."

"...there is total lack of objective evidence to support that view that any dingo was actually involved in the incident that night and to the contrary a considerable quantity of evidence to suggest that a dingo could not have been involved"

**Coroner Galvin's Findings**  
***Second Coronial Inquest***<sup>45</sup>

These experts turned out to be wrong.

There was evidence from local experts that was scarcely heard.

Trackers were asked to look at the scene the first evening. They were very experienced with dingos.

They knew straight away what it took the whitefella legal system many years to sort out.

However our court systems were not able to hear their evidence:

The evidence of the trackers was given in Pitjantjatjara and translated into English through an interpreter. The differences of interpretation were, at times, manifest. It would appear that Nipper Winnmarti was at the time the spokesman for the aborigines at the Rock rather than an expert tracker. His eyesight was poor. However, the police questioned him rather than other trackers who assisted in the search. Communication in English with the other trackers would have been very difficult. It thus may well be that the persons who actually did the tracking were not questioned by the police until July 1983.

**Royal Commission of Inquiry into**  
***Chamberlain Convictions***  
**1987**



The 2012 Coronial Inquest found in part that:

*In Mr Minyintiri's expert opinion the tracks of a dingo that he saw showed that "it walked as though it had some load on it...when I was tracking the dingo I knew, or I thought, that it was carrying the baby for sure".<sup>46</sup>*

In the trial that saw an innocent woman sent to jail, the jury heard incorrect evidence on dingos from two English experts and did not hear correct evidence from local experts.

## STORY 2

Some years ago a noted German anthropologist, Professor K., visited the Yarrabah Mission station and asked that the natives might be sent to him in order that he might measure their skulls. He sat accordingly on the veranda with a big pipe and measured the skulls of all who came, and the more he measured the more he shook his head. "Will you not come into the school and examine the children?" said the superintendent. "They have made remarkable progress, and up to the age of eleven do the same lessons as the children in the white schools." "No," said the Professor; "I do not want to see them. I know that they are incapable of learning anything. I have measured their skulls." "But will you not look at our steam-engine, which is run entirely by two aboriginal boys?" "No," was the reply. "They cannot possibly understand machinery. I have measured their skulls." "But," persisted the superintendent, "will you not at least listen to our band, which is often in requisition when good music is required in Cairns?" "No," was the reply. "It is no good. I have measured their skulls."

***The Right Reverend Gilbert White, D.D.  
Bishop of Willochra  
Thirty Years in Tropical Australia  
(1885-1917)***

## STORY 3

These are issues for us to talk about, where do you get power and how do you exercise it. Because that's what the gadiya [white people] got and that's what he wants to hold on to. How do you shake it away from him so that he has got to start to negotiate? That means that he sits on that side of the table and you sit here. Instead of him asking you and picking your brain and getting your ideas and informing him, helping him to become an expert, we tell him the experts are sitting down here. The People. They drag the knowledge away from people. And we are left to try and fight against people who say they know all about this group or that group or they are the expert on that other mob.

***The Crocodile Hole Report (1991)  
Kimberley Land Council and  
Waringarri Resource Centre<sup>47</sup>***

## QUESTIONS

In the circles you are part of how do you evaluate who is worth listening to?

Do you tend to listen more to people who are like you?

What are the requirements to be heard in your church? In your institution?

Do they exclude particular types of people?

### Why don't we listen?

We have 'rules' for who has knowledge that effectively exclude some people.

We have rules for what is reasonable that effectively exclude some types of knowledge.

The powerful are inevitably self-deluded about the 'goodness' of the systems of power they maintain and benefit from.

And they use that power to avoid listening to the disturbing voice of the other.

This is justified by conflating 'has power' with 'has superior knowledge'.

Listening *adds to the stock of available reality*;<sup>48</sup> the more we listen the more we know what is really going on.

But listening is difficult.

It takes a lot of effort (and time, and awkwardness) to imagine your way into another's point of view.

And it risks shattering what you hold to be true, your concept of yourself and your society.

We have a sort of mental immune system that seizes and neutralises any alternative view that may disturb our perception of ourselves as good.<sup>49</sup>



## Jesus talked about this:



The reason I speak to them in parables is that "seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand."

With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says:

"You will indeed listen, but never understand,  
and you will indeed look, but never perceive.

For this people's heart has grown dull,  
and their ears are hard of hearing,  
and they have shut their eyes;  
so that they might not look with their eyes,  
and listen with their ears,  
and understand with their heart and turn—  
and I would heal them."

**Matthew 13: 13-15**



We would, of course, prefer to think we don't need healing at all.

## STORY 4

The Dialogues recommended that one of the functions of the Voice would be 'monitoring' the Commonwealth's use of the race power (section 51 (xxvi)) and Territories power (section 122).

This means that discriminatory legislation like the Northern Territory Emergency Response would be contested before it originates.

***Final Report of the Referendum Council***

In 2007 the Howard Government introduced sweeping changes to land, governance, income, work, schooling, medical treatment and welfare in Indigenous Communities across the Northern Territory.

They did not consult anyone affected.



As people in our own land, we are shocked by the failure of democratic processes, of the failure to consult with us and the total disregard for us as human beings.

***Elders Statement against NT Intervention***  
**7 February 2011<sup>50</sup>**

I acknowledge that the instigation of the NTER [Northern Territory Emergency Response] by the [Howard] government was a major shock to many Aboriginal people and communities in the Northern Territory and was seen as a serious affront. There was no consultation before it was initiated, and the nature of some of the measures and coercive tone utilised undoubtedly caused anger, fear and distrust.

***Jenny Macklin***  
***Minister for Families, Housing, Community Service and Indigenous Affairs<sup>51</sup>***

Why do you think the Government didn't consult?

## TO DO

Most Australians do not know how to relate to Aboriginal people. They relate to stories told by former colonists.

***Professor Marcia Langton<sup>52</sup>***

Listening is a rare happening among human beings. You cannot listen to a word another is speaking if you are preoccupied with your appearance or impressing the other, or if you are trying to decide what you are going to say when the other stops talking, or if you are debating about whether the word being spoken is true or relevant or agreeable. Such matters may have their place, but only after listening to the word as the word is being uttered. Listening, in other words, is a primitive act of love in which a person gives self to another's word, making self accessible and vulnerable to that word.

***William Stringfellow***  
***Count It All Joy***

Today listen to some First Nations Voices.

Read the '**Our Story**' section of the **Final Report of the Referendum Council**.

**Read** Rom Watangu – The Law of the Land at Appendix D, **The Final Report of the Referendum Council** or in **The Monthly**.

**Read** the **National Indigenous Times**.



**Read some twitter feeds:**

**Professor Megan Davis** or **Indigenous X** or **Celeste Liddle**

**Read** the **Reverend Glenn Loughrey's blog**.



## PRAY

Listen carefully and incline the ear of  
your heart

***Rule of St Benedict***

God is, of course, the ultimate strange other.

Spend your prayer time today in silence,  
inclining the ear of your heart to God.

## GO DEEPER

In 1968, the American First Lady Bird Johnson held a Woman Doers' Luncheon at the White House on *What Citizens Can Do to Help Insure Safe Streets* (that is 'how can we solve the crime problem?')

Eartha Kitt was invited because she was involved in activism for a group of youths in a high-crime area of Washington DC.

During the lunch she said that juvenile crime was in part a pushback against being drafted to serve in the Vietnam War; the young did not consider it worthwhile to be a good guy because those with criminal records avoided the draft.

There was a swift cultural and political backlash. It was considered angry, rude and disrespectful to the First Lady to have mentioned the war.

Eartha Kitt was blacklisted by President Johnson and she had to go overseas to find work.

She said years later:

"The thing that hurts, that became anger, was when I realized that if you tell the truth -- in a country that says you're entitled to tell the truth -- you get your face slapped and you get put out of work."

***Eartha Kitt***  
***The White House Incident***<sup>55</sup>

WATCH

Have you been at a gathering where someone said something that was true and relevant but outside the boundaries of what was acceptable to say?

Have you done it yourself?

Have you wanted to do it, but refrained?

Why are the boundaries there? What is good about them? What is troublesome about them?



## OR

Lost Conversations is a book which brings together perspectives from a diversity of Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors, all with first hand knowledge of what happens when 'black' and 'white' Australians come together to work on change.

**You can find it (for free) at:**

<http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/lost-conversations-finding-new-ways-for-black-and-white-australians-to-lead-together/>

42 It's Our Country; Indigenous Arguments for Meaningful Constitutional Recognition and Reform edited by Megan Davis and Marcia Langton

43 <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/response-referendum-council%E2%80%99s-report-constitutional-recognition>

44 <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2017/december/1512046800/noel-pearson/betrayal>

45 <http://www.famous-trials.com/dingo/465-galvinfindings>

46 [https://justice.nt.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0006/205377/azaria-chantel-chamberlain.pdf](https://justice.nt.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0006/205377/azaria-chantel-chamberlain.pdf)

47 <http://www.jawun.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/15-Crocodile-Hole-Report-1991.pdf>

48 This phrase is taken from R. P Blackmur talking about John Berryman (a poet)

49 Robert Lifton was an expert in totalitarian regimes. He conducted a study of Nazi doctors and wrote about '...a universal proclivity toward constructing good motives while participating in evil behaviour. That proclivity is one of the remarkable dimensions of human adaptability... For no reality is directly or fully given to us human beings. Rather we must inwardly "construct" that reality on the basis, of what we inwardly bring to what is "out there"'. <http://phdn.org/archives/holocaust-history.org/lifton/contents.shtml>

50 The signatories are Rosalie Kunoth Monks, Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra, Harry Nelson, Miriam Rose Ungunmerr-Baumann, Djapirri Mununggiritj, Dhanggal Gurruwiwi, George Gaymarani Pascoe. Read the whole statement at: <https://www.creativespirits.info/downloads/Elders-statement-against-nt-intervention-07-02-2011.pdf> Or listen to the elders at [http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2011/04/aye\\_20110416\\_1812.mp3](http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/rn/podcast/2011/04/aye_20110416_1812.mp3)

51 <https://www.eurekastreet.com.au/article.aspx?aeid=25496>

52 <http://afcarchive.screenaustralia.gov.au/downloads/pubs/WellHeard.pdf>

53 <https://www.sbs.com.au/nitv/>

54 <https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/aboriginal>

55 See also [http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2008-12-29/news/0812280062\\_1\\_first-lady-eartha-kitt-lady-bird-johnson](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2008-12-29/news/0812280062_1_first-lady-eartha-kitt-lady-bird-johnson)







### **“Death of the Innocents”**

*Acrylic on canvas*

Aboriginal people in the Mudgee area were victims of a range of methods designed to eradicate them from the land. These included poisoned flour (white circles), poisoned water (blue circles) and attack on camps and groups of people (other circles).

*Massacre of the innocents: Matthew 2:16*

PART 4

"THE TORMENT OF OUR POWERLESSNESS"

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future.

These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness.

**Statement from the Heart**

[A Committee consulting on Constitutional Recognition] visited mostly remote and regional communities during 2014. Despite being peppered with technical, legal questions about section this and subsection that, the witnesses spoke of the realities of life in their communities using the language of hopelessness, abandonment and despair.

These transcripts frequently brought me to tears. Yet their views, their perceptions of the unfreedom that defines their existence, was not adequately reflected in the reports and not captured at all in the mainstream media.

How can this be of no concern to anyone in positions of power? What kind of system blithely ignores these perceptions?

**Professor Megan Davis**  
*Listening but not hearing*<sup>56</sup>

## DISCUSSION

When a person or a group of people is clearly suffering, you can blame what has been and is being done to the people. Or you can blame the people themselves.

We have a long, long history of placing all the blame on the sufferer.

## QUOTES



Then Job answered:

‘No doubt you are the people,  
and wisdom will die with you.

But I have understanding as well as you;

I am not inferior to you.

Who does not know such things as these?

I am a laughing-stock to my friends;  
I, who called upon God and he answered me,  
a just and blameless man, I am a laughing-stock.  
Those at ease have contempt for misfortune,  
but it is ready for those whose feet are unstable.’

**Job 12: 1-5**



That [the Aborigines] are an inferior race of human beings it is vain to deny (the probable extinction of the race from natural causes is a proof of this)

**Editorial Opinion**  
**2 May 1846**  
**Geelong Advertiser**

In 1859, [Francis] Galton published a scientific work *Hereditary Genius*, in which he concluded that it was nature, rather than nurture, that made the superior man. Galton had tracked familial relations among nearly 1000 prominent English leaders – judges, statesmen, bankers, writers, scientists, artists, and so forth – and found that this top class came from a small, select group of people. Many were closely related. A poor person who looked at Galton’s data might have decided that his study revealed the obvious – that in class-conscious England, privilege beget success. Galton’s own life exemplified this. He had been able to make his mark as an explorer, and subsequently as a scientist, because of the wealth he had inherited. But to Galton, the data provided proof that intelligence was inherited and that a small group of successful English families enjoyed the benefits of a superior germ plasm.

Galton’s notions had pronounced political implications. Humans, he had determined, were decidedly unequal. Democratic ideals that men were of “equal value”, he said, were simply “undeniably wrong and cannot last.”

**Robert Whitaker**  
***Mad in America: Bad Science, Bad Medicine and the enduring Mistreatment of the Mentally Ill***

**(Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) was best known for his research into eugenics and human intelligence)**



## DISCUSSION

You would think you would attribute the most blame for a situation to the people with the most power to shape it.

So it is particularly odd that we still have such a focus on blaming First Nations people given their long history of powerlessness.

But we would like to think Australian society is an objective meritocracy.

The rules are neutral like the rain and apply equally to all.

Any disparity of position is due to the inferiority or superiority of individuals.

However the rules are made, and applied, by those in power.

They can be as biased towards their own interests as anything else they do.

## STORY 1

**Kev Carmody**  
***Thou Shalt Not Steal***

There was a frontier preoccupation with 'lawless Aborigines' who persisted in 'stealing' cattle.

Those expressing these concerns were not similarly worried about whitefellas stealing land (or children, or women, or labour, or wages).

Whitefellas taking land and living on it in obedience to whitefella rules was 'settling'.

Whitefellas taking land and living on it, without white legal title, was 'squatting'.

The Australian squatter discovers for himself available country – marks his road with his dray wheels – fights the blacks when necessary, and makes nearly as good a use of the country he occupies as if it were his freehold property.

**Edward M. Curr**  
**16 January 1856**  
**(describing 19th century Victoria)<sup>58</sup>**

LISTEN<sup>57</sup>

There were not legal agreements in those days in the Territory – people just took over cattle stations by the gun, more or less. They eliminated the blacks as much as possible from the best country and defined where their properties would be by the power of the gun – and of course the whites had guns.

**Charles Perkins**  
***A Bastard like Me***  
**(describing early 20th century Northern Territory)**

Squatting was the path to formal legal title for many early pastoralists. Possession was 9/10 of the law (unless you were Indigenous).

The squatter stars in *Waltzing Matilda*, Australia's unofficial national anthem.

His formal legal claim is probably as uncertain as the swagman's but the outcome depended on who had power on their side.

LISTEN<sup>59</sup>

**Ali Mills**  
***Waltjim Bat Matilda***  
**Kriol version of "Waltzing Matilda" sung in the Gurindji-Kungarakana language**



## STORY 2

In the 1960s the Government sold lands in the Gove Peninsula for a Bauxite mine without consulting the traditional Yolngu owners at all.

The Yolngu people conveyed their objections to Parliament on the illustrated 1963 Bark Petitions, which included:

*[T]hey humbly pray that the Honourable the House of Representatives will appoint a Committee, accompanied by competent interpreters, to hear the views of the Yirrkala people before permitting the excision of this land.*

*They humbly pray that no arrangements be entered into with any company which will destroy the livelihood and independence of the Yirrkala people. And your petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray God to help you and us.*

**View the whole petition at the link at:**

<http://aiatsis.gov.au/collections/collections-online/digitised-collections/yirrkala-bark-petitions-1963>

The Bark Petition we presented to parliament was not just a series of pictures, but represented the title to our country under our law

***Galarwuy Yunupingu***<sup>60</sup>

The Government, unmoved, pressed forward with the mine.

Galarwuy Yunupingu<sup>61</sup> said ‘it was clear that our law was invisible and the only way to fight the Balanda [whitefella] was using Balanda law’.<sup>62</sup>

And so the Yolngu took the government to court in what became known as the Gove land rights case.

When Professor W.E.H Stanner was making anthropological preparations for the Gove land rights case, he was taken into the bush by some of the old men, who led him by the hand towards the singing. He was not allowed to raise his head until commanded to do so. When told to look, he saw at his feet the holy *rangga* or emblems of the clan, effigies of the ancestral beings, twined together by long strings of coloured feathers. While Stanner looked on, some of the men performed intricate dances. One of the oldest men, Mathaman, then said, “Now I can die.” Another said to Stanner, “Now you understand.” These holy *rangga* were the clan’s title-deeds to its land. The men thought that any intelligent onlooker such as an anthropologist or judge would have to understand. The Rirratjingu and the Gumatj, the main plaintiff clans in the case, decided to take their *rangga* into Darwin to show the court. They thought the court would certainly understand. It was unimaginable to these men that the court may not.

The court did not understand.

***Frank Brennan***  
***One land, One nation***



The Yolngu claim that the land was theirs went up against a line of Court Authorities saying Australia was unoccupied and un-owned at the time of Colonisation:

There is a great deal of difference between the case of a Colony acquired by conquest or cession, in which there is an established system of law, and that of a colony which consisted of a tract of territory practically unoccupied, without settled inhabitants or settled law, at the time when it was peacefully annexed to the British dominions. The Colony of New South Wales belongs to the latter class. ... There was no land law or tenure existing in the Colony at the time of its annexation to the Crown.

***Cooper v Stuart (1889)***  
***Decision of the Privy Council***  
***(At that time Australia's highest court)***

The claim there was no 'settled law' could not be more wrong; traditional Indigenous law has the quality of not being changeable, that is it is more 'settled', if 'settled' is what counts, than colonial law has ever been.

It is similarly untrue that Australia was 'practically unoccupied', 'without settled inhabitants'<sup>63</sup> or that there was a 'peaceful annexation'.<sup>64</sup>

In his 1971 Gove Land Rights decision, Justice Blackburn said he was bound by *Cooper v Stuart*.

He found that 'sacred *rangga* are, among other things, charters to land, is a matter of aboriginal faith: they are not evidence, in our sense, of title'.<sup>65</sup>

He concluded that the Yolngu people did not have property rights to their land.

## DISCUSSION

I think Australian society is like a game of football.

The dominant folk set the goals, make up the rules and define the boundaries and if you abide by all that then they are happy.

Of course if you abide by all that they will probably win.

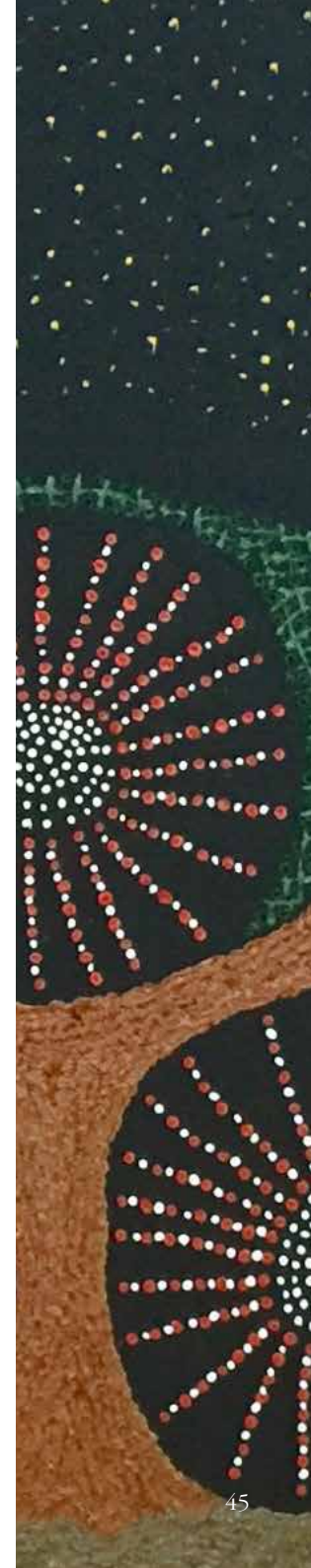
They are running the show.

So it is set up in their interest.

The places at the top are, by and large, reserved for them, their children and people like them.

They set the criteria to succeed and they reward, not that surprisingly, people like themselves.

And because they control the game they can put a thumb on the scale at any point. And all too often, they do.



### STORY 3

When the British arrived in Central Victoria in 1835 the Kulin people were driven from their lands.

In 1843 they asked for a small piece of the land that had been taken to live on and farm.

They were denied.

In 1859 they again asked for land:

*'They want a block of land in the country where they may sit down, plant corn, potatoes...and work like white men.'*<sup>66</sup>



They were given 80 acres and told the government would 'most sacredly retain it for them'. But after they had spent over a year clearing the land and planting wheat and vegetables a group of local squatters convinced the government to sell the land to them, and they were forced off.

They went in search of another 'promised land' and established Coranderrk (near present-day Healesville).

*There, they built huts, cleared and worked the land, produced and sold craft, and by 1867 were grinding flour from their own grain and cutting timber at their sawmill. These Aboriginal farmers won gold medals at Royal Agricultural Shows, and scarcely a year went by when hops grown at Coranderrk did not command the highest price at the Melbourne markets. Many white settlers envied their productivity and politicians were amazed yet annoyed by the determination of the Coranderrk residents to manage their own affairs.'*<sup>67</sup>

They were undermined by the Aboriginal Protection Board, who wanted them to work under white overseers, and by surrounding white farmers, who wanted their land.

They fought for a decade, managing to secure a Royal Commission but in the end they were forced off the land.

*William Barak emerged as a patient supplicant to the invaders' conscience. He led Coranderrk residents in a respectful campaign of delegations, strikes, protests, petitions and letters to the press expressing their concerns to the Victorian government and public. He and other leaders frequently walked the sixty kilometres from Coranderrk to the Victorian parliament to pay their respects and make their case to an institution they were implored to trust. They wore their best clothes on the long walk and some carried their shoes in their hands. Nevertheless, in 1886 sixty residents were ejected from Coranderrk, in 1893 half the reserve was excised for white farmers, and in 1924 the settlement was closed. Tragically, this story has been repeated across the nation...*<sup>68</sup>

Edmund M. Curr, a member of the Aboriginal Protection Board, argued that removal was necessary for reasons of both health and discipline.

He said:

Anyone who knows the blacks knows their will is nothing, that they might have a serious objection now which they would not remember three months afterwards. I would suggest that they should be moved for their own benefit...If I saw my child playing on the brink of a well I should remove the child even if he cried. I should remove the blacks from Coranderrk whether they liked it or not. I do not believe they have any strong objection.

**1881 Parliamentary Inquiry into Coranderrk**<sup>69</sup>

## STORY 4

John Flynn is an Australian hero remembered for his tireless work for the Australian Inland Mission (AIM) amongst remotely based white folk.

His ministry was funded by a 1853 bequest by a Scottish woman, a Mrs Henrietta Smith of the Estate of Dunesk.

She had wanted it used 'for the aborigines of South Australia'.

In the 1930s Charles Duguid led a campaign to reclaim the money for its original intent, and specifically to fund the Ernabella Mission in the APY lands

The Presbyterian Church resisted until in 1939:

*the Church in Scotland, as trustees of the gift, suddenly sold the Smith of Dunesk properties on the grounds that Mrs Smith's original intentions regarding the 'education and evangelisation' of the Aborigines of South Australia had to be given weight now that, with the establishment of Ernabella, there was 'an activity among them' (the Aborigines). The Scottish Church directed that the*

*interest from the proceeds of the sale be divided equally between the AIM and Ernabella. The pro-AIM forces in South Australia fought a rearguard action to retain their preponderant share of the income but the game was up.<sup>70</sup>*

I have been sore about this taking of blacks' money to help the whites, who were never in so dire need, ever since I was interested in the blacks; but my small voice went nowhere with effect. I am very glad that you have taken steps to right this wrong.

**JBR Love (1889-1947)**  
**Missionary Linguist and Teacher**

This story is not unique to any particular church or group of people but is depressingly representative of what happens when one group controls money and resources 'for the benefit' of another group.

Over and over there is a tendency for the money to divert back to the interests of the majority group.

It still happens:

\$500m meant for Indigenous services was spent elsewhere by NT government

**Helen Davidson**

Northern Territory Cash Shuffle sees \$2b taken from indigenous aid

**Stephen Fitzpatrick**





## STORY 5

### Playing the Race Card

We moved back to Melbourne a few years ago, after a couple of years away. My son, Elijah, was about to start year 7. He was excited to be back in his familiar stomping ground, and back with his old friends.

I rang up our local government high school to book him in. I was told they were full, and there wasn't room for him.

I was relaying this story to a mum at a practice match for his football team. They were converting an old warehouse, the entire warehouse, into a fancy house, and knowing how hard it was for us to get into this school, I asked how they managed it, given they lived much further away from it than us. It was by no means their closest high school.

She told me matter-of-factly, that they chose the property they were now living in and would later rent out when they could move into their warehouse conversion, because it put them in the zone for this high school.

She then asked how I managed to get Elijah in. Knowing of my Aboriginal heritage, she casually asked, 'did you pull the race card?'

I was more than a little taken aback.

I took a breath.

Then I responded.

Yes. Yes, I did pull the race card.

She nodded, knowingly.

I told her, I pulled the white, educated, middleclass race card. When I was told there was no room for Elijah at the school, I calmly told the person on the other end of the phone that I was indeed very sorry to hear that they were struggling with the high numbers they had enrolled, and that I appreciated that people like me enrolling students late made it very difficult for them. But that I also knew, that as my closest government high school, they were actually obliged to accept Elijah's enrolment, as inconvenient as it might be. When she went to argue with me, I told her that it was fine. I would ring back the next day after I had spoken to the department of education and they

had time to speak with the principal. I suggested that perhaps the school wasn't aware what their legal obligations were in this instance, but that I was sure it would all be sorted out in no time once the appropriate phone calls had been made and everyone knew that they did in fact have to accept Elijah's enrolment.

I rang back the next day. It was all sorted.

The irony wasn't lost on me though. This woman thought it was perfectly acceptable to ask if I was given some sort preferential treatment because I was Aboriginal. In her mind, we got everything easier. This, from a woman who purchased a rental property that they could live in while they renovated an enormous warehouse, within the zone for the school they wanted.

***The Reverend Helen Dwyer  
Chaplain, Overnewton Anglican  
Community College***



## QUESTIONS

Can you think of a time someone else used an advantage particular to their race or class or upbringing over you?

Can you think of a time that you used an advantage particular to your own race or class or upbringing over someone else?

How can you tell if a situation is actually fair?

## DISCUSSION

You could treat our views about what is property and what is theft and whether First Nations people were actually here, had laws, or were connected to their lands as understandable errors in thinking.

We all make mistakes. Looking back at history with the standards of the present is unfair.

But they are a particular type of blindness.

They all trend toward justifying the self-interest of the person setting the rules.

So they are not random errors.

They enable one lot of people to seize the resources of another lot of people whilst proclaiming the moral high ground.

Debates in this area can be very simplistic and boil down to whether people had good intentions or not.

This is a completely inadequate understanding of how evil comes to be.

The question is more to do with whether people's morality is being corrupted to support their own self-interest and whether their self-interest is blinding them to what is really going on.

## SCRIPTURE



Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgement you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbour's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbour, "Let me take the speck out of your eye", while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbour's eye.

**Matthew 7**



Wise people, when they are in the wrong, always put themselves right by finding fault with the people against whom they have sinned.

**Anthony Trollope  
Barchester Towers**

## QUESTION

'How do we solve the Aboriginal problem' is a question that reveals a lot.

The need to see ourselves as good, in the face of a history that contains so much that isn't, causes a blindness which manifests in scapegoating the other.

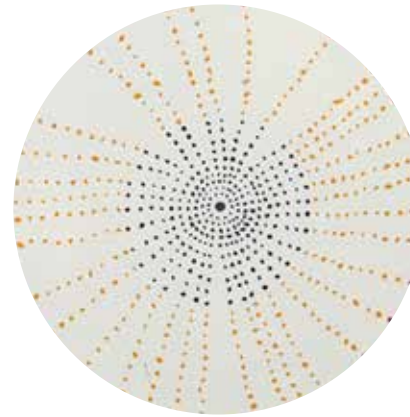
Assuming we can clearly see and fix someone else's problem is never a good start, theologically speaking.

Perhaps a better starting point for a whitefella is asking 'how do I solve the whitefella problem?'

What would it be like if you looked at Australia from this perspective?







## PRAY

Our Father in Heaven  
We want everyone to know that  
your name is sacred.  
We want you to be boss of all  
the world.  
Please make this world how  
you want it to be,  
The same way heaven is.  
We ask you to give us all we really  
need today.  
We have done wrong things.  
Please forgive us  
the same way we forgive other  
people when they hurt us.  
Save us from things that are too  
hard for us.  
Save us from everything evil.  
We pray this because you have all  
the power and you are boss of  
all things. You are the only  
true God, now and always.

**Amen.**

*From the Easter Sunday Morning,  
Holy Communion © 2013  
Diocese of the Northern Territory.  
Resource compiled by the Reverends  
Anne van Gend, Tavis Beer and Kate  
Beer in conjunction with the people  
of Kewuly*



## GO DEEPER

On a plate by Toby Morris

OR

**Read** an American comparison:

Ta-Nehisi Coates

The Case for Reparations

56 <https://griffithreview.com/articles/listening-but-not-hearing/>

57 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L6fem7-ucxg>

58 'Letter to the Editor', New Zealand Spectator, cited by Samuel Furphy in Edward M. Curr and the Tide of History <https://press.anu.edu.au/publications/aboriginal-history-monographs/edward-m-curr-and-tide-history>

59 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WgLTzD6JxcA>

60 [https://app.lms.unimelb.edu.au/bbcswebdav/courses/166392\\_2009\\_1/G.Yunupingu.doc](https://app.lms.unimelb.edu.au/bbcswebdav/courses/166392_2009_1/G.Yunupingu.doc)

61 Galarwuy Yunupingu was the court interpreter in the Gove Land Rights Case

62 [https://app.lms.unimelb.edu.au/bbcswebdav/courses/166392\\_2009\\_1/G.Yunupingu.doc](https://app.lms.unimelb.edu.au/bbcswebdav/courses/166392_2009_1/G.Yunupingu.doc)

63 The claim that there were no 'settled inhabitants' refers to the false Colonial belief that Indigenous people wafted across the land without being connected to any particular place. This is completely untrue. [See Part 8]

64 See also another influential case cited in this decision: "I take it to be clear law...that 'if an uninhabited country (as this at the time of its settlement must be considered to have been, for the wandering tribes of its natives, living without certain habitation and without laws were never in the situation of a conquered people, or this colony that of a ceded country); if such a country be discovered and planted by English subjects, all the English laws then in being which are applicable to their situation, and the condition of an infant colony, are immediately their bithright [sic], and as their applicability arises from their improving condition, come daily into force. They are not in the situation of persons who go to settle in a conquered country, where laws have pre-existed, and which continue to exist until changed by lawful authority." Justice Burton, Supreme Court of NSW, McDonald v Levy (1833)

65 Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd (the "Gove land rights case") (1971) 17 FLR 141, 201.

66 [http://www.minutesofevidence.com.au/static/media/uploads/Book%20Excerpts/excerpt\\_-\\_history\\_of\\_coranderk\\_inquiry.pdf](http://www.minutesofevidence.com.au/static/media/uploads/Book%20Excerpts/excerpt_-_history_of_coranderk_inquiry.pdf)

67 Professor Tom Griffiths, <http://insidestory.org.au/compounding-a-long-history/>

68 Ibid.

69 [http://www.minutesofevidence.com.au/static/media/uploads/coranderk\\_moe\\_digitized.pdf](http://www.minutesofevidence.com.au/static/media/uploads/coranderk_moe_digitized.pdf)

70 <http://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/p70821/pdf/ch0744.pdf>









**“Turning To The Heavens and The Earth I”**

*Acrylic on canvas*

This piece explores a black and white cosmology, one which sees humans as the centre of the world and God as being only interested in them. It allows no room for those who are not white, human or productive and sees the Christian metanarrative only in these terms. It is one of three pieces in a series exploring the changing cosmology influencing the fading of a traditional understanding of the white Christian narrative.

PART 5

"THE PROBLEM OF THE 3 PER CENT MOUSE  
AND THE 97 PER CENT ELEPHANT"



We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

*Statement from the Heart*

This type of sacrifice from strength is the key to leadership. My father had to sacrifice much, too much, to reconcile his life with the ways of the modern world. But he did so. What Aboriginal people ask is that the modern world now makes the sacrifices necessary to give us a real future. To relax its grip on us. To let us breathe, to let us be free of the determined control exerted on us to make us like you. And you should take that a step further and recognise us for who we are, and not who you want us to be. Let us be who we are – Aboriginal people in a modern world – and be proud of us. Acknowledge that we have survived the worst that the past had thrown at us, and we are here with our songs, our ceremonies, our land, our language and our people – our full identity. What a gift this is that we can give you, if you choose to accept us in a meaningful way.

**Galarrwuy Yunupingu**  
**Rom Watangu: The Law of the land**  
**Appendix D: Final Report of the**  
**Referendum Council<sup>71</sup>**

The old men and women were carrying fire...  
Let's get that fire up and running again.

**Darwin Consultation**  
**Our Story**  
**Final Referendum Council Report**

## QUOTES

Despite being in the army we were still looked down on and treated with suspicion by most in the white civilian population.

You had to be careful not to be seen outsmarting even the dumbest of them, or else you risked a hiding. You had to be careful not to beat them in a fight or else they might seek you out later on. So you kept your eyes low, said 'yes boss' to even the most unlikely crap, and tried to keep moving in a group whenever possible.

**Alec Kruger**  
***Alone On The Soaks: The Life and Times of Alec Kruger***  
**Alec Kruger and Gerard Waterford**  
**(Alec Kruger was an author, activist, soldier and member of the Stolen Generations, here writing about WWII)**

Thus a domination determined in terms of race and colonialist expansion [the Anglican Church before the Second World War] was designed to place missionary Aborigines into the lowest level of the Australian class structure.

In 1952...the Chairman of ABM, Archdeacon CS Robertson, informed his board:

*we have simply provided him [the Aboriginal] with food and clothing. We have attended to his educational [and] physical needs, but we are still looking upon him as a 'hewer of wood and a drawer of water.'*

**Noel Loos**  
***White Christ Black Cross: The emergence of a Black church***

As soon as you showed any enterprise or initiative on an Aboriginal reserve, you were removed forcibly or induced to move off because it was 'the right thing to do'. It cuts the head off the tribe. If you did not want to move off you had to subject yourself to having your initiative suppressed.

**Charles Perkins**  
***A Bastard Like Me***  
**(writing about the 1960s)**

When his adoptive father, Benny Mabo, was ill in 1974 [Eddie] Mabo was granted permission to visit by the chairman of the council only on condition that he did not involve himself with “political affairs”, a precondition he found infuriating and insulting.

**Noel Loos and Koiki Mabo**  
**Edward Koiki Mabo: His Life and Struggle for Land Rights.**<sup>72</sup>

It is as if we have been ushered onto a stage to play in a drama where the parts have already been written. Choose from the part of the ancient noble spirit, the lost soul estranged from her true nature or the aggressive drunk alternatively bucking and living off the system. No other parts available for “real Aborigines”.

**Michael Dodson**  
**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner**  
**Wentworth Lecture, 1994**<sup>73</sup>

When black women don't perform hope and inspiration as you expect, some of you have no idea how to act

**Roxane Gay**<sup>74</sup>

## DISCUSSION

When you don't have power you have to exist within the parameters set for you by someone else.

If you stay within them, things go fine.

If you stay within them, things go so smoothly the more powerful probably don't notice that everything isn't wonderful.

As far as they are concerned things are.

And they may well assume that everyone exists in the freedom they personally experience.

It is only when the constrained assert their full humanity that their constraints become visible.

The resulting trouble is evidence of the price being paid for the previous ‘peace’.

In 1960 four African American men sat down at a white lunch counter in Woolworths Greensboro and asked for a cup of coffee:

By making the refusal to accept money apparent, the sit-ins created a new link between what was sayable and what was visible. Segregated businesses were not discussed, they were simply a ‘fact’, part of the common sense of race. The apparently simple act of sitting at a counter to ask for service was unthinkable. Once this was challenged, the lunch counters were integrated within weeks, though many arrests were made as well. The relatively simple gesture of the sit-in...raised the stakes of the issue to another level.

**Nicholas Mirzoeff**  
**How to See the World**

If Rosa Parks had quietly surrendered her bus seat to a white passenger, things would have continued ‘as normal’ that day.

The 1965 Freedom Ride did a similar thing in Australia. Charles Perkins, one of the leaders, writes:

*The Freedom Ride...brought, I think, to a lot of people, a confrontation with race relations in a very uncomfortable kind of way. Aborigines were being persecuted in country town and other areas in Australia, and they were second-class citizens. White people, the first-class citizens, made the laws which kept the Aborigines in their 'place'.*<sup>75</sup>

The Freedom Ride bus arrived in Moree, NSW and found out that Aboriginal people were only allowed to swim in the pool for 2 hours a week. So they took a busload of Aboriginal kids to the pool. They were refused entry and crowds of people, the police and mayor become involved. Eventually, despite the disapproval of many locals, they were let in and had a swim.

Charles Perkins describes what happened next:

*The police then asked us to leave because the crowd was becoming uglier and there were fights breaking out. It was getting dark too. A lot of the blokes were really set on giving us a going-over. The police called in more reinforcements and formed a solid line of police to the bus. It was not very wide and we had to go through it. I got a couple of punches on the shoulder and a couple on my side. I was literally covered in spit. Rotten eggs and tomatoes continued to be thrown at close range. They were throwing dirt in our faces. But I did not get as much as the bloke in front of me, escorting me through the police line. He was a cop, six foot four tall, and everything was landing on him because of his height. His white helmet was dripping with eggs.*<sup>76</sup>

Adam Goodes was a skilled and awarded Indigenous football player. He took some strong political positions on racial issues. From 2013 to 2015 he faced booing during football matches, which eventually forced him into retirement.

Waleed Aly describes the booing of Adam Goodes as being in this category of thing:

*There's no mystery about this at all... Australia is generally a very tolerant society until its minorities demonstrate that they don't know their place...the minute someone in a minority position acts as though they're not a mere supplicant then we lose our minds, we say you've got to get back in your box here...The minute an Indigenous man stands up and is something other than compliant the backlash is huge and it is them who are creating division and destroying our culture.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xebu735nFYw>

The powerful have controlled the physical and psychological space that First Nations people have been allowed to occupy for a very long time.

And punished them when they don't conform.

## QUESTIONS

Have you ever felt like you had to pretend to be less than you were to fit into a space? What did it feel like?

## DISCUSSION

The biggest gift that the white blokes can give you is that we all become Australians, that we are all equal although some people are more equal than others.

***Tracker Tilmouth***  
***Tracker by Alexis Wright***

The challenge remains to find a Constitutional amendment that will succeed, and which does not undermine the universal principles of unity, equality and "one person one vote".

***26 October, 2017***  
***PM Response to the Referendum***  
***Council's Report on Constitutional***  
***Recognition***

After hundreds of years of what can only be described as across the board affirmative action for whitefellas, now there is a pre-occupation with equality.

First Nations people are just the same as everyone else. They should look like, act like and live like everyone else.

They need no particular voice in our



processes, because our processes are neutral because 'one person, one vote'.

However this isn't true.

Our processes have not historically been neutral and are not neutral now.

Firstly if the structures are designed by one lot of people around their own way of living (say individual land title and proof by written documents) and they make it hard to live another way (say communal legal title and proof by oral history or performance) then they are not equal at all.

**Watch** the following and try to imagine what it would be like to live as an extreme minority in a country run according to Yolngu law:



**You Understand,  
Don't you?**

Secondly we have chosen to build a society where property and influence are inherited, but guilt is not, which has enabled particular families or groups of people to build up dominant

interests over the generations. (This is, of course, the opposite of an objective meritocracy).

Past inequities persist in the pattern of wealth and power distribution, no matter how much we talk about 'equality'.

This is exacerbated by a system where we allow money a disproportionate influence on political decision-making.

Donations corrupt decision-making.

And powerful lobbies exert their power.

The Minerals Council of Australia exists to exert influence on government, and it does.

There is no First Nations body with equivalent power.

It is often whitefella pastoral and mining interests that clash with First Nations people's interests in land.

For most of colonial history First Nations people had no say.

Pastoral and mining interests triumphed.

Do we really think 'one person, one vote' means it is a level playing field now?

That, say, a mining magnate and a remote Traditional Owner have equal influence as to the policies and laws around land use?

Thirdly one of the failings of democracy is what J S Mill called 'the tyranny of the majority'; the threat majority rule poses to minority groups.<sup>78</sup>

The founders of the Australian Constitution were so concerned for the problem this posed to the smaller States that they built in the Senate as a corrective mechanism against 'one person one vote'.

(So it is a nonsense for the PM to cite 'one person one vote' as a 'universal principle').<sup>79</sup>

That is why the States have the same number of Senators, no matter their population.

And, as Shireen Morris points out, there are more Indigenous Australians than Tasmanians.<sup>80</sup>

First Nations people were not part of the Constitutional discussions and the problem the tyranny of the majority posed to them was not considered.

## QUESTION

**Read** the following:

“Middle classness” is not really an economic category at all: it was always more social and political. What being middle class means, first and foremost, is a feeling that the fundamental social institutions that surround one – whether police, schools, social service offices, or financial institutions – ultimately exist for your benefit. That the rules exist for people like yourself, and if you play by them correctly, you should be able to reasonably predict the results. This is what allows middle-class people to plot careers, even for their children, to feel they can project themselves forward in time, with the assumption that the rules will always remain the same, that there is a social ground under their feet.

**David Graeber**  
*Anthropology and the rise of the professional-managerial class*

Where do you situate yourself in this?

## DISCUSSION

Even if the Government happens across something actually useful for First Nations people their policies are likely to change in 4 to 8 years when the Government changes.

If you are in a majority grouping and the government wants to change something that affects you in a way you don't like then people like you lobby to prevent it and often enough they do.

That is why proposed changes to, say, superannuation or franking credits or negative gearing prompt a huge fight whereas the Commonwealth Intervention got through with no trouble at all.

(It is much easier for a Government to reduce the Newstart allowance, than the Age Pension, for the same reasons).

Government is experienced very differently depending on who you are in Australia.

This instability across time is seen in the history of First Nations representative bodies.

They have existed.

Most recently, ATSIC was formed in 1990 as a group of elected First

Nations people to advise government, advocate and deliver and monitor some government Indigenous programs.<sup>81</sup>

John Howard opposed its introduction and eventually his government dismantled it.

The government said this was because it was corrupt.

This is a curious reason as we don't abolish State or Territory Governments or banks (or cricket teams) when they are found to be corrupt. We reform them. It is part of doing politics.

It seems more likely it was abolished because a country that has never listened well to First Nations voices is likely to abolish any First Nations voice if it is inconvenient to the government of the day.

If the powerful get to pick which particular First Nations voice they want to listen to on any particular issue they are likely to pick from the diversity of voices the one that is most pleasing to them.

That individual may well be sincere and honest but that isn't the point. Over time the powerful are really just listening to themselves.



## QUOTE

Australian parliaments and executive government simply do not work for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Routinely and invariably. While Australians complain about politicians, governments and bureaucracies, our democratic institutions, systems and processes generally work for the majority. The electoral system ultimately drives responsive government. Not so for extreme minorities whose presence in that electoral system is negligible.

I think non-indigenous Australians get a wrong impression of the ability of indigenous people to get government to work for them. Australians think we hold our own, when the truth is quite different.

They think because of the tragedies besetting indigenous peoples and the egregious nature of our social and economic problems – reported in those mind-numbing and imagination-defying statistics – that we are in there defining and leading any societal response through the government. But that is not the truth.

They think because of the prominent reporting of indigenous issues that this somehow reflects the power of indigenous participation. But this is not the truth.

They think because of the large budgetary appropriations in the name of indigenous affairs that this reflects a system working for indigenous Australians. But this is not the truth. The truth is there is a massive industry around these appropriations and it is predominantly non-indigenous.

They also think that because there are many prominent indigenous leaders, such as the late Charles Perkins, Lowitja O'Donoghue the Dodsons, the Yunupingus, Marcia Langton and so on, this indicates a powerful political presence in the Australian democracy. This is not the truth...

The answer lies in our extreme minority status. The scale and moral urgency of the indigenous predicament far exceeds the power of indigenous participation in this country's democratic process.

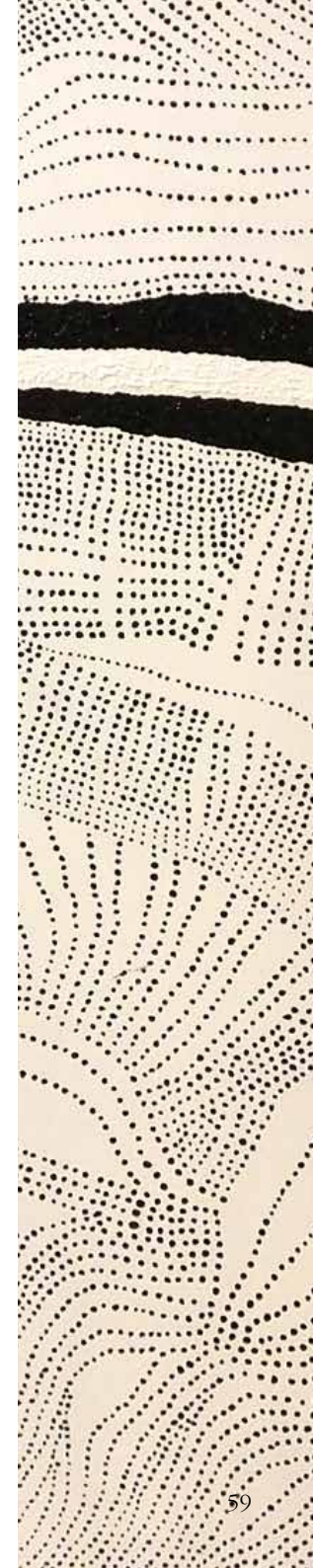
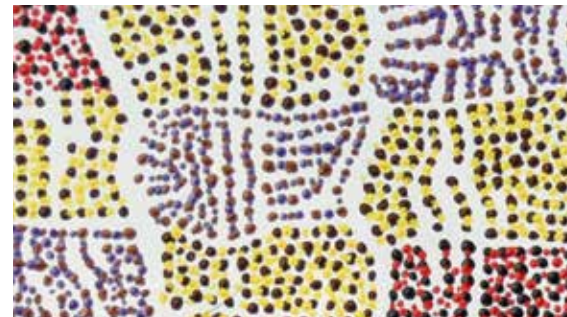
We have to solve the democratic problem.

It is the problem of the 3 per cent mouse and the 97 per cent elephant.

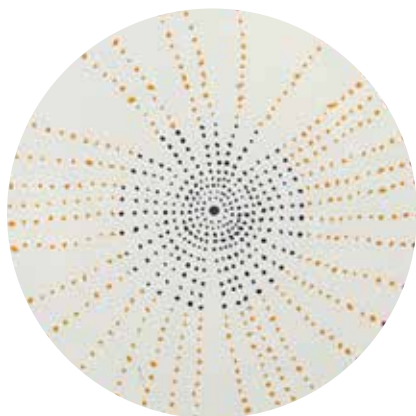
**Noel Pearson**

***A Rightful Place: Race, recognition and a more complete commonwealth***

***Quarterly Essay***







## PRAY

### The Magnificat

And Mary said,  
'My soul magnifies the Lord,  
and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour,  
for he has looked with favour on the  
lowliness of his servant.  
Surely, from now on all generations will  
call me blessed;  
for the Mighty One has done great  
things for me,  
and holy is his name.  
His mercy is for those who fear him  
from generation to generation.  
He has shown strength with his arm;  
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts  
of their hearts.  
He has brought down the powerful from  
their thrones,  
and lifted up the lowly;  
he has filled the hungry with good things,  
and sent the rich away empty.  
He has helped his servant Israel,  
in remembrance of his mercy,  
according to the promise he made to  
our ancestors,  
to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.'

**Luke 1: 46-55**

## GO DEEPER

Consider the following passage by  
David Graeber, an Anthropologist from  
the London School of Economics:

Imagine, if you will, some warlike tribe (let's call them the Alphas) that sweeps out of the desert and seizes a swath of land inhabited by peaceful farmers (let's call them the Omegas). But instead of exacting tribute, they appropriate all the fertile land, and arrange for their children to have privileged access to most forms of practical education, at the same time initiating a religious ideology that holds that they are intrinsically superior beings, finer and more beautiful and more intelligent, and that the Omegas, now largely reduced to working on their estates, have been cursed by the divine powers for some terrible sin, and have become stupid, ugly, and base. And perhaps the Omegas internalize their disgrace and come to act as if they believe they really are guilty of something. In a sense perhaps they do believe it. But on a deeper level it doesn't make a lot of sense to ask whether they do or not. The whole arrangement is the fruit of violence and can only be maintained by the continual threat of violence: the fact that the Omegas are quite aware that if anyone directly challenged property arrangements, or access to education, swords would be drawn and people's heads would almost certainly end up being lopped off. In a case like this, what we talk about in terms of "belief" are simply the psychological techniques people develop to accommodate themselves to this reality. We have no idea how they would act, or what they would think, if the Alphas' command of the means of violence were to somehow disappear.

<https://libcom.org/library/utopia-rules-technology-stupidity-secret-joys-bureaucracy>

Do you recognise any of Australia's  
history in here?

**OR**

**Learn** more about the Freedom Ride:

<https://aiatsis.gov.au/exhibitions/1965-freedom-ride>

**Read** the whole of Mick Dodson's powerful speech (extracted above):

<https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/end-beginning-redefining-aboriginality-dodson-1994>

*Speech by Michael Dodson, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner at the Wentworth Lecture, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1994*

71 Also at <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2016/july/1467295200/galarwuy-yunupingu/rom-watangu>

72 These conditions were given by the Torres Strait Islander council. Eddie Mabo said they were responding to pressure from the Queensland Department of Aboriginal and Islander Advancement.

73 <https://www.humanrights.gov.au/news/speeches/end-beginning-redefining-aboriginality-dodson-1994>

74 Tweet: Roxane gay @rgay 11 January 2018

75 A Bastard Like Me

76 Ibid.

77 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBJHA6x4-cs&app=desktop>

78 J S Mill, On Liberty

79 The Parliament of Australia's web site states: If the notion of 'one vote, one value' is seen as central to representative democracy, the Senate fails one important test. However 'one vote, one value' is only one definition of 'fair' representation. The granting of equal representation to the Australian states, regardless of the population size, was regarded as fair and proper because the founders were concerned to protect the smaller states from being swamped by the larger.  
[https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Senate/Powers\\_practice\\_n\\_procedures/pops/~/.link.aspx?id=DCF2CDCE8D454BBA9768A9B61474D94F&z=z](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Senate/Powers_practice_n_procedures/pops/~/.link.aspx?id=DCF2CDCE8D454BBA9768A9B61474D94F&z=z)

80 <http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2018/03/07/4813237.htm>

81 [https://www.aph.gov.au/About\\_Parliament/Parliamentary\\_Departments/Parliamentary\\_Library/Publications\\_Archive/CIB/Current\\_Issues/Briefs\\_2004\\_-\\_2005/05cib04](https://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/CIB/Current_Issues/Briefs_2004_-_2005/05cib04)







## **“Sovereignty”**

*Acrylic on canvas*

Since the invasion of their land, Aboriginals have endured a repeated and continuing genocide. This genocide ranged from physical extermination as occurred in my home country and cultural genocide through the destruction of language, cultural and spiritual practices. Yet we have remained. Why? It's simple. Our country remains sovereign and supreme and a mother always protects her children.

PART 6

HELPING IS NOT ALWAYS HELPFUL

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

**Statement from the Heart**

DISCUSSION

Paradigms in Indigenous affairs often fall into two options which sit in tension with each other.

One is allowing people power to make decisions about their own situation (self-determination).

The second is exercising power over them to 'help'.

Helping sounds good on the face of it.

However our history should make us cautious.

STORY 1

Eventually the frontier wars came to an end. As violence subsided, governments employed new policies of control and discrimination. We were herded to missions and reserves on the fringes of white society. Our Stolen Generations were taken from their families.

**Our Story**  
**Final Report from the**  
**Referendum Council**

A parable

*Interventionists are coming  
interventionists are coming*  
the cries echo through the dusty community as the army arrive in their chariots.

Parents and children race for the sand hills burying the tommy axes and the *rifela*

hiding in abandoned cars  
along the fence line.

One woman ran to the waterhole  
hiding her baby in the reeds  
dusting her footprints with gumleaf.

Other children went and got their cousin  
shouting *mum you gone rama rama*  
*you should see the clinic.*

That night the woman went back to the waterhole  
leaving her child in the reeds again  
this time in a basket.

In the morning the children return  
holding their cousin crying  
*mum you gone rama rama*  
*you should see the doctor.*

At the clinic I feel her pulse  
check her blood pressure  
test for diabetes.

Staring deeply in my eyes  
until finally our heads bent  
she whispers quietly in Luritja

*this son him name Moses.*

**Ali Cobby Eckermann<sup>82</sup>**

*And they took us from our family.  
Took us away  
They took us away  
Snatched from our mother's breast  
Said this was for the best  
Took us away.*

**Archie Roach**  
**Took the Children Away**



The Stolen Generation was dreamt up and instituted by many people who meant well:

No doubt the mothers would object and there would probably be an outcry from well meaning people about depriving the mother of her child but the future of the children should I think outweigh all other considerations.

**Mr FJ Mitchell**  
**Acting Administrator of the Northern Territory**<sup>83</sup>  
**12 September 2011**

No half-caste children should be allowed to remain in any native camp, but they should all be withdrawn and placed on stations. So far as practicable, this plan is now being adopted. In some cases, when the child is very young, it must of necessity be accompanied by its mother, but in other cases, even though it may seem cruel to separate the mother and child, it is better to do so, when the mother is living, as is usually the case, in a native camp.

**Professor Walter Baldwin Spencer**  
**Chief Protector of the NT**<sup>84</sup>  
**1912**

Children are removed from the evil influence of the aboriginal camp with its lack of moral training and its risk of serious organic infectious disease. They are properly fed, clothed and educated as white children, they are subjected to constant medical supervision and in receipt of domestic and vocational training.

**Dr Cecil Cook**  
**Chief Protector and Chief Medical Officer of the NT**<sup>85</sup>  
**1924**

As a result of the policies of these people, children were taken to The Bungalow in Alice Springs.

Mrs Isabelle and Mr John Smith, the widow and son of an Anglican Parish priest (Father Percy Smith) visited in the 1930s and described what they saw:

*...there was an air of gloom and repression about the place and the children were sad, silent and sullen. There was no laughter and it was a slow process to gain the confidence of the children... The children and their mothers were frightened to say anything...*<sup>86</sup>

The Superintendent at that time was removed in 1934 and eventually convicted of child abuse.

Minister John McEwan visited in 1937 and was shocked:

*I know many stock breeders who would not dream of crowding their stock in the way that these half-caste children are huddled.*<sup>87</sup>

It is a complex story.

There were people within the system who made it a lot better than it would otherwise have been; adopted families and missionaries who loved the children in their care and were loved back.

And there are official findings stating that those who made it happen had good intentions:

I have great sympathy for Mrs Cubillo, for Mr Gunner [two members of the Stolen Generation] and for others who, like them, suffered so severely as a result of the actions of many men and women who thought of themselves as well-meaning and well intentioned but who today would be characterised by many as badly misguided politicians and bureaucrats. Those people thought that they were acting in the best interests of the child. Subsequent events have shown that they were wrong.

**Justice O'Loughlin**  
***Cubillo v Commonwealth [2000] FCA***  
***1084 (11 August 2000)***

But is 'meaning well' a sufficient reason for it to have happened? For all the suffering and brokenness that came out of these policies?

A lot of the objections to Kevin Rudd's 2008 Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples were based on the fact that those who implemented the policies meant well.

But most harm is caused by people who think they are doing good and almost all of it by people who profess good intentions.

Surely we have to move beyond our preoccupation with the intentions of the powerful to a more sophisticated understanding of how harm is caused so we don't repeat it.

## STORY 2

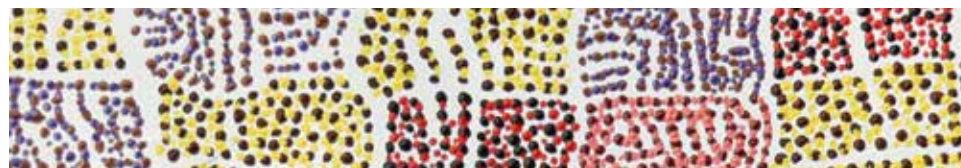
In 1963, Yolngu leaders wrote letters to the Northern Territory Government expressing their grave concerns about the Gove Peninsula Mine.

One received the following reply:

*Dear Narijan,*

*I have received your letter telling me of your worries about the mining people going into your tribal country on Gove Peninsula. Firstly, I want to tell you that I only want to help you and all the other Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory. I would not allow anything to happen that would harm you and am only interested in doing things that will help you people to learn how to live and work in the same way and side by side with the white man. Now you might think that because the government has let the mining people go into Gove that it does not look as though I am helping you; but I am certain that as mining work goes on and gets bigger, that your Aboriginal people at Yirrkala are going to benefit in a lot of ways...*

***Your sincerely, (H.C. Giese)***  
***Director of Welfare***<sup>88</sup>



In the mid-2000s the West Australian Government decided to build a LNG plant on land subject to native-title claims at James Price Point in the Kimberley.

Premier Colin Barnett was unable to get an agreement to use the land on terms that pleased him and in 2010 he threatened to compulsorily acquire the land to put pressure on the negotiations. He justified this to reporters by citing:

*high rates of unemployment, poor education, poor health standards, domestic violence, abuse and neglect of children. Am I as the Premier of Western Australia going to sit back and say I'm going to give up the opportunity to help those people? I'm sorry. I will not do that.*<sup>89</sup>

Professor Michael Dodson said:

*Compulsorily acquisition...cuts across people's power to make decisions in their best interest... What the Premier is perhaps saying is that "well I know what's in your best interest." What we should be saying is, wait Mr Premier, where is the evidence around Australia that that is what will happen because invariably it doesn't turn out that way"*<sup>90</sup>



## QUESTIONS

Do you think the letter from Mr Giese is sincere? What about the words of Premier Barnett?

Why are they talking about helping?

How can you tell if something that claims to be helpful is in fact helpful?

## SCRIPTURE

He must increase, but I must decrease.

**John 3:30**

If then there is any encouragement in Christ,  
any consolation from love, any sharing in  
the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy,  
make my joy complete: be of the same mind,  
having the same love, being in full accord  
and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish  
ambition or conceit, but in humility regard  
others as better than yourselves. Let each of  
you look not to your own interests, but to  
the interests of others. Let the same mind be  
in you that was in Christ Jesus,  
who, though he was in the form of God,  
did not regard equality with God  
as something to be exploited,  
but emptied himself,  
taking the form of a slave,  
being born in human likeness.  
And being found in human form,  
he humbled himself  
and became obedient to the point of death—  
even death on a cross.

**Philippians 2: 1-8**

There isn't a great theological precedent  
for one lot of people with power over  
another lot, retaining that power and  
using it to 'help'.

John the Baptist, Jesus and Paul  
conducted their ministries whilst having  
pretty well no earthly power.

There is a stark difference between  
'helping' and giving over some power  
because justice requires it.

Helping retains the power. Justice  
involves giving some of it up.

Of course, when they clash, we choose  
helping more often than not.

## QUESTIONS



*Aboriginal woman receiving alms  
from a European Lady c.1884,  
State Library of NSW<sup>91</sup>*

[Bono] has been generating and reproducing ways of seeing the developing world, especially Africa, that are no more than a slick mix of traditional missionary and commercial colonialism, in which the poor world exists as a task for the rich world to complete.

**Harry Browne**  
***The Frontman: Bono***  
***(In the Name of Power)***

How do you feel about this picture?

Is there a part of you that sees the poor world as a task for the rich world to complete?

Is there a part of the church that sees the poor world as a task for the rich world to complete?

When have you been helped and it has been good? When has it been bad?

How can you tell a time to help from a time to hand over power?



## DISCUSSION

The only way to know if 'help' is actually 'helpful' is to listen to the helpee.

Ivan Illich captures this, in his biting style, in a speech given to young Americans contemplating a volunteer trip to Latin America:

If you insist on working with the poor, if this is your vocation, then at least work among the poor who can tell you to go to hell. It is incredibly unfair for you to impose yourselves on a village where you are so linguistically deaf and dumb that you don't even understand what you are doing, or what people think of you. And it is profoundly damaging to yourselves when you define something that you want to do as "good," a "sacrifice" and "help."

**Ivan Illich**  
***To Hell With Good Intentions***<sup>92</sup>

Some people who talk about helping, are.

But whitefellas talking about helping First Nations peoples whilst in practice acquiring First Nations land, resources and labour is also the persistent pattern of colonisation.<sup>93</sup>

The *Statement from the Heart* doesn't ask for help.

Instead it calls for empowerment.

1.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

***Statement from the Heart***

The Constitution is the most powerful limit on the Government.

To change it requires a Referendum that gains the support of a majority of voters in a majority of states.

If the Voice is enshrined in the Constitution it can't be so easily eliminated at the whim of any particular Government.

This call is for a representative body that gives First Nations Peoples a Voice into Parliament.

This is so sensible a suggestion legally that it was endorsed by the Law Council of Australia.<sup>94</sup>

It is also a very modest request.

The proposed body has no legislative power (it is not the 'third chamber of parliament' set up as a straw man by some of those who oppose it).

It can still be completely ignored.

All it does is give First Nations people a say in the decisions that affect them.

2.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination.

We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.

***Statement from the Heart***

Makarrata is an ancient Yolngu way of resolving a dispute.

‘Agreement-making’ or ‘treaty’ convey some of its meaning.

The call for a Makarrata between governments and First Nations people is not new.

The National Aboriginal Conference called for Makarrata in 1979.<sup>95</sup>

In 1988, Australia’s bicentennial year, the Chairmen of the Northern and Central Land Councils, Galarrwuy Yunupingu

and Wenten Rubuntja, presented Prime Minister Bob Hawke with the Barunga Statement on bark.

It included a call for the Australian Government to recognise the rights of Aboriginal landowners and to formalise a treaty with them.

Bob Hawke responded by promising a treaty before the end of the current session of Parliament.

*Yothu Yindi* released ‘Treaty’ in 1991 in protest at the Government failure to honour Hawke’s promise:

LISTEN  
*Treaty*<sup>96</sup>  
*Yothu Yindi*

A Makarrata is an agreement between equals.

Sovereign people speak on their own behalf and determine their own identity.

This is very different from being helped.

Helping means the boundaries in which the help is given (and the conditions around it) are determined by the helper.

The Helper is superior to the helpee.

The *Statement from the Heart* doesn’t ask whitefellas to solve First Nations problems.

It says here are two steps that will empower us to solve our own problems.

Dismissing or ignoring this and returning to rhetoric about ‘helping’ (on whitefella terms) is an old, old manoeuvre.





## TO DO

**Explore** more deeply what Makarrata means.

Galarrwuy Yunupingu a Gumatj clan leader and Yothu Yindi Foundation chairman explains:

The principles of makarrata have guided Yolngu people in North East Arnhem Land through difficult disputes for centuries and they are useful as a guide to the current challenge.

First, the disputing parties must be brought together. Then, each party, led by their elders, must speak carefully and calmly about the dispute. They must put the facts on the table and air their grievances. If a person speaks wildly, or out of turn, he or she is sent away and shall not be included any further in the process. Those who come for vengeance, or for other purposes, will also be sent away, for they can only disrupt the process.

The leaders must always seek a full understanding of the dispute: what lies behind it; who is responsible; what each party wants, and all things that are normal to peacemaking efforts. When that understanding is arrived at, then a settlement can be agreed upon. This settlement is also a symbolic reckoning — an action that says to the world that from now on and forever the dispute is settled; that the dispute no longer exists, it is finished. And from the honesty of the process and the submission of both parties to finding the truth, then the dispute is ended. In past times a leader came forward and accepted a punishment and this leader once punished was then immediately taken into the heart of the aggrieved clan. The leader's wounds were healed by the men and women of the aggrieved clan, and the leader was given gifts and shown respect — and this former foe, who had caused pain and suffering to people, would live with those that had been harmed and the peace was made — not just for them but for future generations.

***Makarrata the map to Reconciliation***  
***The Australian, July 2017***

**Read** also:

<http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2017-08-10/makarrata-explainer-yolngu-word-more-than-synonym-for-treaty/8790452>

What is familiar to you in this process?  
What is new?

How is it similar to your current understanding of 'reconciliation'?  
How is it different?

How is this similar or dissimilar to 'closing the gap'?

The reason that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are calling for treaty is because we are seeking a real recognition of what has happened – not mere symbolism. Treaty is about acknowledging that there has been a battle – that there have been serious consequences – it is about saying that the people of today's Australia recognise that the prosperity this nation enjoys relative to the rest of the world, is built upon a land that was taken forcibly from its rightful possessors.

***The Reverend Daryl McCullough***  
***Secretary of NATSIAC<sup>97</sup>***



## PRAY

God help us to change.  
 To change ourselves and to change  
 our world.  
 To know the need for it.  
 To deal with the pain of it.  
 To feel the joy of it.  
 To undertake the journey without  
 understanding the destination.  
 The art of gentle revolution.

**Amen.**

*Michael Leunig*

God help us  
 To rise up from our struggle.  
 Like a tree rises up from the soil.  
 Our roots reaching down to our trouble.  
 Our rich, dark dirt of existence.  
 Finding nourishment deeply  
 And holding us firmly.  
 Always connected.  
 Growing upwards and into the sun.

**Amen.**

*Michael Leunig*

## GO DEEPER

### The Stolen Generations

**Listen** to some stories of life at  
 The Bungalow

[http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/local/  
 alicesprings/201310/r1186175\\_15213791.  
 mp3](http://mpegmedia.abc.net.au/local/alicesprings/201310/r1186175_15213791.mp3)

**Listen** to some Stolen Generations'  
 testimonies

[http://www.  
 stolengenerationstestimonies.com](http://www.stolengenerationstestimonies.com)

**Read** *Bringing Them Home*

[https://www.humanrights.gov.au/  
 our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-  
 islander-social-justice/publications/  
 bringing-them-home-stolen](https://www.humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/bringing-them-home-stolen)

**Listen** to Bishop Saibo Mabo, the  
 National Torres Strait Islander Bishop,  
 speaking about the Apology:

[https://m.youtube.com/  
 watch?v=kZ3DFDR1sM8](https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=kZ3DFDR1sM8)

## The dark side of helping

We will always get blamed for it. It is: *We have come to save you and you don't want to be saved, and it's your fault.* It is like bushfire victims. *We are going to evacuate this area from bushfires but if you do not come it is your fault, you die.* That sort of process. That is what happened with Aboriginal people and still happens today. They say: *We dictate the policy, you won't have any input into the policy, but we'll dictate the policy and this is what we think you should be doing. If you don't do it then it's your fault, it's not our fault. We've been there trying to help you.*

**Tracker Tilmouth**  
**Tracker**  
**Alexis Wright**

**Read** Rudyard Kipling's 1899 poem  
 'The White Man's Burden' (this version  
 was written to invite the United States  
 to assume Colonial control of the  
 Philippines):

[http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/  
 poems\\_burden.htm](http://www.kiplingsociety.co.uk/poems_burden.htm)

How are help and blame linked?



82 <http://www.poetryinternationalweb.net/pi/site/poem/item/18979>

83 cited in *Cubillo v Commonwealth* [2000] FCA 1084

84 Bringing them Home Report, Chapter 9

85 Ibid.

86 Ibid.

87 Bringing them Home Report

88 cited in John Harris, *One Blood*

89 <http://www.abc.net.au/4corners/rush-to-riches/8952822>

90 <http://mobile.abc.net.au/news/2010-09-02/gas-hub-land-to-be-compulsorily-acquired/2245784>

91 <http://archival.sl.nsw.gov.au/Details/archive/110317272>

92 An address by Monsignor Ivan Illich to the Conference on InterAmerican Student Projects (CIASP) in Cuernavaca, Mexico, on April 20, 1968. [http://www.swaraj.org/illich\\_hell.htm](http://www.swaraj.org/illich_hell.htm)

93 King Leopold of Belgium in 1864 said [Forced labour was] 'the only way to civilise and uplift these indolent and corrupt peoples of the Far East' Cited by Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A story of greed, terror and heroism*. King Leopold's actions caused the death of millions in the Congo whilst Belgium became rich on Congolese Rubber.

94 1 November 2017, 'The Law Council of Australia has expressed profound disappointment at the Federal Government's decision to reject the Referendum Council's recommendation for a referendum into the creation of a representative body to give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander First Nations a Voice to the Australian Parliament...The Law Council last week announced its full and unqualified support for the recommendations of the Referendum Council and confirmed it remains committed to seeing their implementation.'  
<https://www.lawcouncil.asn.au/media/media-releases/referendum-rejection-profoundly-disappointing-constitutional-reform-must-advance>

95 See also: Prime Minister the Rt Hon Malcolm Fraser established a Senate inquiry whose report, 200 Years Later: Report by the Senate Standing Committee on Constitutional and Legal Affairs on the Feasibility of a Compact or 'Makarrata' between the Commonwealth and Aboriginal People, was delivered after the 1983 election. Final Report of the Referendum Council

96 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7cbkx4G8U>

97 'Why a Treaty?' ABM Partners: National Reconciliation Week 2017







**“The Baptism on the Banks of the Goulburn River with White Cockatoo”**

*Acrylic on canvas*

Plunging into the cool waters of the local river was welcomed in the summer heat. It washed away the dirt and dust of a life on country and set you free to rise up new and refreshed. Somewhere in the gums along the river would be the ubiquitous white cockatoo. There were no white doves and, in my art, the white cockatoo symbolises the Spirit, especially in this story. The tree symbolises sentient life including that of humanity.

*Baptism of Jesus: Matthew 3:13-17*

PART 7

A 60,000 YEAR OLD AUSTRALIAN CHURCH?



Jeff Schmidt, in his critique of the subtle corruptions of professional ethics, says people tend to speak out on distant issues that they have no power over, but in their own sphere of influence, they lack similarly courageous views.<sup>98</sup>

It is important that the church speak into government policy.

However, it is easy to argue for justice when it costs us nothing.

And problems we don't have direct control over invariably seem so much simpler than ones we do.

What would it look like if we applied the *Statement from the Heart* to the church?

We seek ... reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful place* in our own **church**. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to our **church**.

***The Statement from the Heart  
(with 'Country' changed to 'Church')***

## STORY 1

I once heard a sermon from Khamsay Phetchareun, a Cambodian minister. He said the missionaries had come to Cambodia and brought the gospel. It was like a sandwich wrapped in cling wrap and was eagerly received. But people didn't know the cling wrap wasn't food. They ate both the sandwich and the cling wrap and the cling wrap stayed in their stomachs and made them ill.

## STORY 2

### Didgeridoo by the Reverend Di Langham

I believe God is outside time. Our outside time is the Dreaming. Dreaming is just as God is "I am". I believe the Eucharist "is". It is outside time. When we have the bread and wine it is as though we are sharing it with Jesus as it was 2000 years ago in our time. We are in that upper room with the disciples and Jesus. It is in that outside time space, we call the Dreaming.

With that in mind I was organising Eucharist in the Cathedral. I arranged for a didgeridoo to be played during the sharing of the wine and bread. Around a week later I received a letter outlining the offense that some clergy had taken that a didge (a heathen instrument) had been played during the service. I was also asked to explain the clash of Aboriginal spirituality and Christianity.

I explained the didge this way:

*When you are in the cathedral and you look up at the pipes of the organ. Are not they a pipe through which wind is*

*blown to make a sound that glorifies God? There are many of them.*

*A didgeridoo is also a pipe through which wind is blown and makes a sound that glorifies our Creator. The beauty of the didgeridoo is that is a wood and comes from this land. What is the difference? Sometimes making indigenous changes that are spiritually creative are positive steps into embracing a much more inclusive picture of God.*

***The Reverend Dianne Langham  
Life Member of NATSIAC  
Anglican Chaplain, Cessnock  
Correctional Centre***

## SCRIPTURE



He also told them a parable: 'No one tears a piece from a new garment and sews it on an old garment; otherwise the new will be torn, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new wine, but says, "The old is good."'

**Luke 5: 36-39**



## QUESTIONS

How can you tell the sandwich apart from the cling wrap?

Who gets to do it?

What does it mean to be an Australian church? How is it different from an English church? How is it the same?

## DISCUSSION

The history of missionary activity in Australia reminds us how easy it is to confuse Christianity with Western Culture.

Early missionaries thought being Christian meant you slept in one location all year round.

And built Western style houses.

And coveted material things:

The desire for material possessions was seen by many to be the only path to work and therefore to civilisation and thence Christianity. Aborigines must, said Judge Burton, acquire 'a taste for the enjoyments and security of civilised life'.

William Schmidt, the Lutheran missionary at Moreton Bay, thought that European goods should be freely distributed to Aborigines in order to create in them a desire for such things. 'Every new want which they acquire,' wrote the South Australian Colonisation Commissioners, 'will eventually prove a permanent stimulus to the degree of industry required for its gratification.'

[Samuel] Marsden's view that Aborigines were not materially-minded was not inaccurate. The problem was his view that the absence of 'wants' impeded the gospel. Although an obsession with property was a defining European trait, it was a characteristic which was among European society's least Christian features. How can the Aborigines ever own property, asked William Watson at Wellington, if they persist in sharing?

**John Harris**  
**One Blood**



It is ironic looking back, as the First Nations cultures were already living much closer to Christian principles (cf Acts 4:32) in some of the exact ways the Missionaries were desperate to change.

Mission has to become less Eurocentric. Mission is really about the word of God becoming living and real in every culture, in every place, in every person, in every people. There is an innate translatableness...to the gospel. The gospel thrives on being translated. It's the only thing in life that says the more it's translated the closer it gets to the original. It's the only thing that dares to make that audacious claim. There's much to be gained from the translation of the gospel into the various cultural idioms that we have. There's only good that can come out of that.



**Bishop Mark MacDonald**  
**National Indigenous Anglican Bishop**  
**Anglican Church of Canada**

I have found things of value in your culture,  
when will you find things of value in  
my culture?

**Rev Dr Djiniyini Gondarra OAM<sup>100</sup>**

So Jesus is like the plant and the  
Aboriginal like the soil.

**The Reverend Nancy Dick**  
**(The first Aboriginal woman to be**  
**ordained as a deacon in the**  
**Anglican Church)<sup>101</sup>**

In 1984, Australia chose our current National Anthem, which commences 'Australians all let us rejoice, for we are young and free'.

It seems our picture of who we are does not extend to the ancient cultures of our land (or our ancient landscape itself).

What about the church?

The church is  
very much a pot  
plant on this  
land without  
becoming a  
part of this land.  
Its age is 230  
years old when  
in reality it can  
become 60,000  
years old.

**The Reverend Dianne Langham**  
**Life Member of NATSIAC**  
**Anglican Chaplain,**  
**Cessnock Correctional Centre<sup>102</sup>**

How would we start to become a 60,000 year-old Australian church?

## TO DO

**Read** the following article by the Reverend Glenn Loughrey:

<https://crosslight.org.au/2017/10/28/church-needs-take-lead-uluru-statement/>

**Reread** the *Statement from the Heart*, going through it point by point and asking how it applies to the church.

## OR

**Spend time** with these words from the Principal of Wontulp-Bi-Buya College in Cairns:

We, as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, need to be able to lead and not be led! That's our mission, but more importantly it is God's mission!...

Perhaps then as ICAT – Indigenous Christian Australian Theologians we can be missionaries to the wider Australia and share what God gave us before the western missionaries came!

**The Reverend Victor Joseph<sup>103</sup>**



## The tricky problem of syncretism

One of the barriers to the full expression of Indigenous Christianity in our churches is the concern about syncretism of Christianity and Indigenous culture.

(That is the mixing of Christianity with Indigenous culture so that it becomes a different gospel).

This is an issue, but one I would argue First Nations Christians themselves take very seriously and have considerable experience and wisdom in working through.

Strangely there seems to be much less concern about a much larger issue: the syncretism of Christianity with Western Culture.

## Syncretism in our history

Looking back at historic evils we sometimes forget the complicity of the church.

We hear more about Dietrich Bonhoeffer or Edith Stein than the institutional churches, which overwhelmingly folded in with Hitler. Or we talk about William Wilberforce and ignore the fact that the Church of England (and the Bishop of

Exeter) owned slave plantations.

The Christian church has been part of, organised, supported and perpetuated much evil.

This desperate desire for a more salutary history was present in Jesus' time too:



And [Jesus] said, 'Woe also to you lawyers! For you load people with burdens hard to bear, and you yourselves do not lift a finger to ease them. Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets whom your ancestors killed. So you are witnesses and approve of the deeds of your ancestors; for they killed them, and you build their tombs. Therefore also the Wisdom of God said, "I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and persecute", so that this generation may be charged with the blood of all the prophets shed since the foundation of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who perished between the altar and the sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, it will be charged against this generation.

**Luke 11: 46-51**



The history of Australian Christianity is similarly challenging.

Colonisation everywhere from Columbus forward had two expressed aims: spreading 'civilisation and Christianity' and acquiring wealth.

Your Highnesses have here another world in which our Holy Faith may be so propagated and whence may be taken so much wealth

**Christopher Columbus  
Letter to the Sovereigns  
31/8/1498<sup>104</sup>**

That is, it was a win-win situation, for the benefit of all.



Our founding documents thus contain kindly words about how to treat those already living here.

The Crown had made promises when it colonised Australia. In 1768, Captain Cook was instructed to take possession 'with the consent of the natives'. In 1787, Governor Phillip was instructed to treat the First Nations with 'amity and kindness'.

But there was a lack of good faith. The frontier continued to move outwards and the promises were broken in the refusal to negotiate and the violence of colonisation.

***Our Story***  
***Final Report of the Referendum Council***

How do we reconcile this stated intent with what actually happened?

There was a fatal flaw built into colonisation even on its own terms.

Treating the colonised well and acquiring wealth always came into tension (it being not beyond the bounds of possibility that the people didn't want to give up their lands, or labour, or resources) and when they did, the wealth won.

That is, it was not possible to serve God and wealth.<sup>105</sup>

This founding tension between what is right and what makes money is still with us.

'Human life is holy and money is not, but [Australia's leaders] worship money...'

***Veronica Brady***  
***Mary Owen Address 1997***<sup>106</sup>

## SCRIPTURE



'Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

'The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

'No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.

You cannot serve God and wealth.

***Matthew 6: 19-24***



## QUESTIONS

How has serving wealth blinded us historically?

How does serving wealth blind us now?

In a world that runs by wealth, how do we live in this tension?

The early responses to the *Statement from the Heart* included this editorial conclusion from the Australian Financial Review:

Those behind the Uluru Statement must do much more to show that its proposals would genuinely help all Indigenous people to participate in the opportunity and prosperity that most other Australians enjoy.<sup>107</sup>

The *Statement from the Heart* uses words like 'fair' and 'truthful' and 'justice' and 'right'.

This response wants evidence of people being 'helped' to 'prosperity'.

What do the different words indicate about the values underlying the world views?

Where should the church stand on this?

## DISCUSSION

For me the problem of syncretism is captured in the aphorism Martin Luther made well known: *Where God builds a church, the devil builds a chapel.*

Wherever Christianity is, there too is its shadow.

Or as Ivan Illich used to say, *the corruption of the best, is the worst.*<sup>108</sup>

So how are we to tell them apart?

We are promised ongoing assistance in determining what is evil (sin), what is good (righteousness), how to make a right discernment (judgement) and what is true:



Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes, he will convict the world about sin and righteousness and judgement: about sin, because they do not believe in me; about righteousness, because I am going to the Father and you will see me no longer; about judgement, because the ruler of this world has been condemned.

I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his own, but will speak whatever he hears, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.

*John 16: 7-13*



One has to say that sin is structured into Australian society, and has been since 1788. What might be described as the primal (or original) sin of the Australian people is the injustice done by the European settlers to the original inhabitants of this continent.

**John Wilcken**  
***A Theological Approach***  
***to Reconciliation***<sup>109</sup>

If this *were* sin then what would righteousness look like?

What about judgement?

How would we hear the 'Spirit of truth'?







## DISCUSSION

Where has the Church been in all of this?  
Through the past century or more the  
Church has both walked with us and walked  
all over us. On one hand the Church has  
been our protector and our friend. On  
the other hand the Church has also been  
complicit in our dispossession, the attack  
on our cultures and in too many cases  
perpetuated wrongs against us.

**Graeme Mundine**  
*Speech for Catholic Mission, 2011*<sup>110</sup>

White man came  
With a Bible in his hand.  
Now Jesus is my brother  
He was traded for my land.

**K L Burns**  
*MRRC Silverwater  
Correctional Centre*<sup>111</sup>

I still hear an argument that everything the  
Colonisers did is justified by the fact that  
we were ‘giving Christianity’ in return.

This wrongly pits Christ against right  
behaviour or justice.

It also assumes that what happened  
when missionaries came was an entirely  
one-sided endeavour and that God was  
not already active here.

We only think that if we are not listening  
to First Nations Christians.

Communities around Australia hold  
stories of dreams and visions given  
before the missionaries arrived which  
meant people recognised truth in what  
the missionaries had to say.<sup>112</sup>

Many First Nations Christians speak of God’s  
activity here long before Captain Cook.

The God made known in the stories of the  
Jewish and Christian Scriptures is a God who  
was sojourning with our people, here in this  
country long before the calling of Abraham,  
or Moses, or St Paul.

**The Revd Dr Garry Worete Deverell**<sup>113</sup>  
*A Trawlookway man from NE  
Trouwerner (Tasmania)*

God, the Creator Spirit, was already here.  
Our Aboriginal culture was already spiritual,  
more overtly spiritual than the European  
culture of those who invaded Australia. God  
was already speaking to us through the law  
revealed in the land.

**Rainbow Spirit Theology: Towards An  
Australian Aboriginal Theology**  
*The Rainbow Spirit Elders*

Given the great evils inflicted on  
them by ‘Christian’ colonists it was an  
extraordinary act of discernment by  
the First Nations people who saw good  
within individual missionaries and  
within Christianity overall.

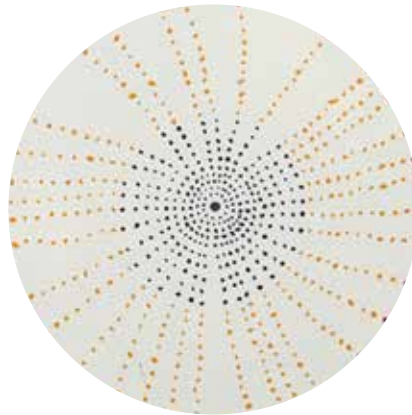
I believe the way forward for the Australian  
church is learning to listen to the spirit  
speaking through the voices of Aboriginal  
and Torres Strait Islander Christians.

## TO DO

Listen to members of the National  
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander  
Anglican Council:

<https://www.natsiac.com/gathering.html>

[https://www.abmission.org/resources.  
php/149/2017-partners-magazine-  
autumn-edition](https://www.abmission.org/resources.php/149/2017-partners-magazine-autumn-edition)



## PRAY

### Prayer of the Aboriginal People

Father of all, you gave us the Dreaming  
You have spoken to us through  
our beliefs  
You then made your love clear to us in  
the person of Jesus  
We thank you for your care  
You own us  
You are our hope  
Make us strong as we face the problems  
of change  
We ask you to help the people of  
Australia to listen to us and respect  
our culture  
Make the knowledge of you grow strong  
in all people  
So that you can be at home in us and  
we can make a home for everyone  
in our land.

**Amen.**

*Prayer composed for the meeting  
between Pope John Paul II and the  
Aboriginal people.*







## GO DEEPER

My culture and my faith, I believe in both ways and it makes me stronger.

**Pantjiti McKenzie**  
*Member of the Central Australian  
Aboriginal Women's Choir*  
*The Song Keepers (Documentary)*

LISTEN<sup>114</sup>

**Jesu Ngananala**  
*The Central Australian Aboriginal  
Women's Choir*

WATCH<sup>115</sup>  
THE TRAILER

Currently showing in cinemas and will be released on NITV (SBS) in July, 2018.

OR

READ<sup>116</sup>

WATCH<sup>117</sup>

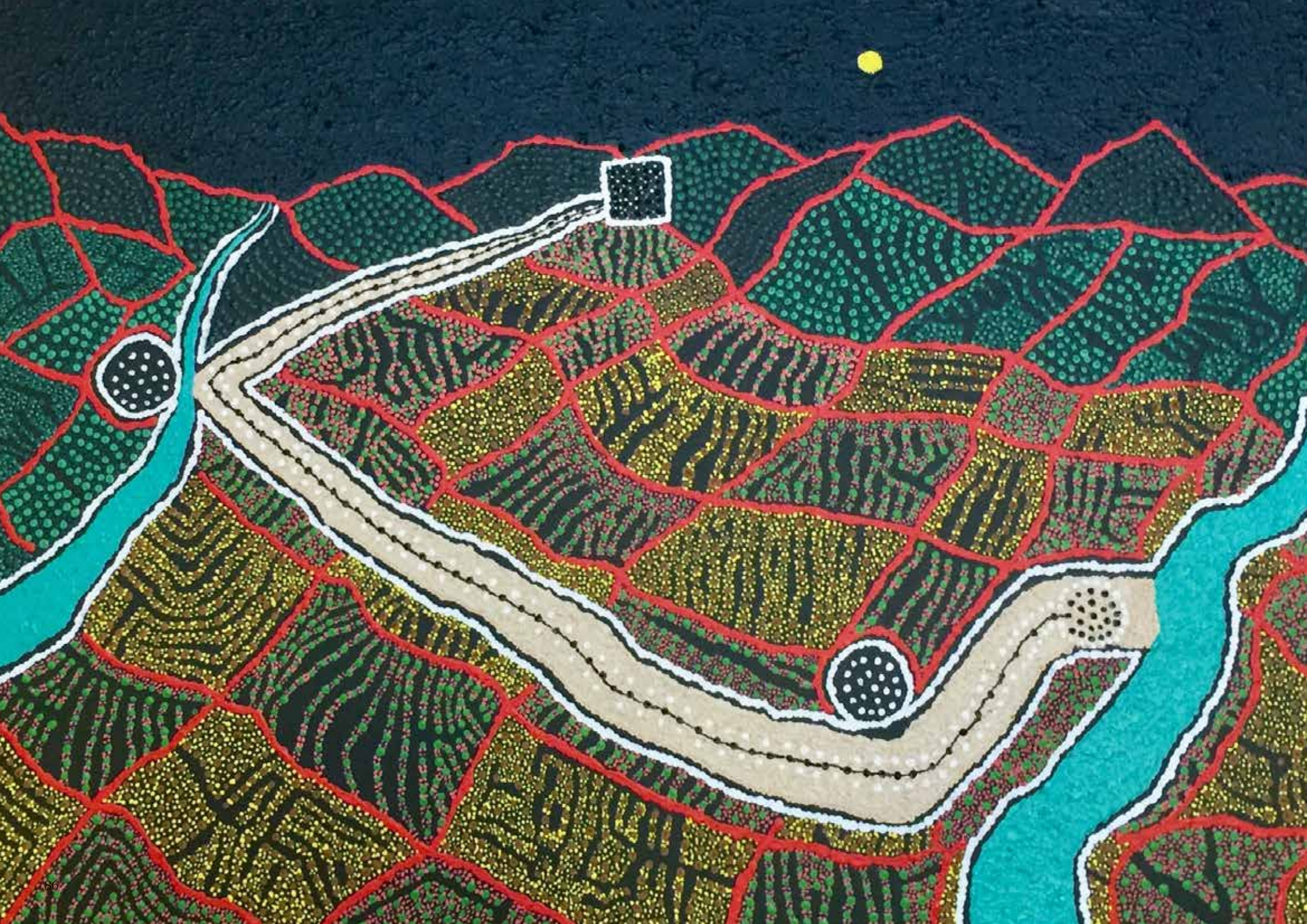
*Keynote speech to the 2015 Sacred Circle  
of the Anglican Church of Canada*  
**Canon Robert Kereopa**  
*Chief Executive Officer, Anglican Missions*  
*Anglican Church in Aotearoa,  
New Zealand and Polynesia*



- 98 Jeff Schmidt, Disciplined Minds: A Critical Look at Salaried Professionals and the Soul-Battering System That Shapes Their Lives
- 99 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LOJJoqn8okQ&feature=youtu.be>
- 100 Cited by Uniting Church President Stuart McMillan <https://assembly.uca.org.au/news/item/1850-our-diversity-is-a-sign-of-health>
- 101 Cited in Freier, Philip L. (1999) Living with the Munpitch: the history of Mitchell River Mission, 1905 - 1967. PhD thesis, James Cook University.
- 102 Private communication quoted with permission.
- 103 <https://www.abmission.org/resources.php/149/2017-partners-magazine-autumn-edition>
- 104 Cited by Tzvetan Todorov in Conquest of America: The Question of the Other
- 105 'Humane' and 'colonisation' were antithetical. Colonisation was engaged in because it was profitable. This profitability was based solely upon the exploitation of the colonised people and their resources. Colonisation was everywhere exploitative. John Harris, One Blood
- 106 Kath Jordan, Larrikin Angel: A biography of Veronica Brady
- 107 <http://www.afr.com/opinion/editorials/uluru-statement-must-deliver-dignity-and-progress-for-indigenous-australians-20170530-gwg0ux-ixzz54DhYkNNs>
- 108 corruptio optimi pessima
- 109 in Frank Brennan, Reconciling Our Differences; a Christian Approach to Recognising Aboriginal Land Rights
- 110 [https://graememundine.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/speech-for-catholic-mission\\_graememundine.pdf](https://graememundine.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/speech-for-catholic-mission_graememundine.pdf)
- 111 <https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/spirituality/aboriginal-christians-christianity>
- 112 I have been told about these dreams directly. See also the dream of Mulinthin in 'Encounter at Port Keats', Eugene Stockton, The Aboriginal Gift.
- 113 Quote from draft of upcoming book
- 114 <https://vimeo.com/174609790>
- 115 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IhEh3kmBSxI>
- 116 <http://www.anglican.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015-08-18-Kereopa.pdf>
- 117 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BrKqK4H83ug>









### **“Journey Into Exile: Never To Return”**

*Acrylic on canvas*

In 1900 the Aboriginal people living on the river at Wollar were moved by force to the mission at Brewarrina 550 kilometres away, never to return. This occurred because of the actions of Jimmy and Joey Governor, the protagonists of ‘The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith’ who had been living there. Only my grandmother was left behind as a young child with the Bailey family at Wilpinjong.

*Jesus’ journey into exile: Matthew 2:13-23*

## PART 8

### WHAT IS LAND FOR?



Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs. This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago.

This sovereignty is *a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors. This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty.* It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown.

How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

***Statement from the Heart***

I always say Australia is like one gigantic storybook. There's a story to every part of the land and sky and sea. When we, as Adnyamanthanha, gather and tell our stories we always say yarta wandatha – 'the land is speaking'. We also say 'yarta wandatha ikandadnha'. The people are speaking as if the land is speaking. So the land is speaking to us and through us in these stories. There's a oneness there.

We are not separated from the land our mother. We always talk about the land as our mother, which fits very closely with the story of Genesis of the Lord God forming humankind from the clay.

These stories that come from the land are sacred. One always needs permission to tell them.

The only way to know our stories is to get to know the people and then they might tell you the story.

***Rev. Denise Champion  
Yarta Wandatha***

## STORY

The Gove Land Rights Case failed.

However the resulting political pressure led to governments legislating for land title for some groups, that is 'land rights'.

The Gove mine went ahead regardless.

Then Eddie Mabo and two others went to court claiming ownership of their family lands in the Torres Strait in the Common law. (Common law comes from court decisions rather than legislation made by Parliament.)

On 3 June 1992 the High Court held that First Nations people *did* already possess legally recognisable connection to their own lands, that is 'native title'.

The common law of this country would perpetrate injustice if it were to continue to embrace the enlarged notion of terra nullius and to persist in characterising the indigenous inhabitants of the Australian colonies as people too low in the scale of social organisation to be acknowledged as possessing rights and interest in land.

***Justice Brennan  
Mabo and Others v Queensland (No. 2)  
(1992) 175 CLR 1 at 42***

The Court said this native title came about because of Indigenous peoples' connection to, and occupation of, their lands.

The end of National Reconciliation Week commemorates this day.



"[Mabo Day] is of great significance for not only me, but for many people, Torres Strait Islander peoples, Aboriginal peoples and for the whole wider community."

"It's a big legacy that this man fought for land rights, native title, for the whole of the Torres Strait..."

I think it is very important for all of us as Christians, to acknowledge and honour that this man is a special man. He started this movement in a way of saying that we do own land, and this is our land, Australia and the Torres Strait."

**Aunty Rose Elu**  
**Life Member NATSIAC**<sup>118</sup>

*Mabo* was no panacea.

It only applied to land that hadn't already been taken away.

Those who may qualify for native title still have to undergo a long and complicated (and unachievable for many) legal process to prove that they have maintained connection to their lands.

And the title Parliaments have given to enact *Mabo* is limited; for example, there is no veto power over mining, merely the right to negotiate.<sup>119</sup>

## DISCUSSION

This late-stage change of heart by the legal system could not, and did not, wipe out 200 years of colonial views justifying the taking of land.

Justice Blackburn summarised the underlying principle:

[A] principle which was a philosophical justification for the colonization of the territory of the less civilised peoples; that the whole earth was open to the industry and enterprise of the human race, which had the duty and the right to develop the earth's resources; the more advanced peoples were therefore justified in dispossessing, if necessary, the less advanced.

***Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd***  
***(the "Gove Land Rights Case")***  
***(1971) 17 FLR 141, 201***

A large land grab became moral if the reason for land is 'development' and Indigenous people were failing to do it.

This was, and still is, widely believed.

With all my feelings for justice towards the Aboriginal tribes... I really could not help asking myself, on seeing this miserable spectacle of humanity, in the midst of a race full of activity and progress, whether such a race could be intended to ramble over, without possessing, much less improving, large portions of the earth? and I could not avoid admitting to myself that that which will not go onward in the world's progress must go down.

**William Howitt**  
***(a Christian and a great critic of***  
***colonisation, published in 1855)***  
***Land, labour, and gold; or, Two years***  
***in Victoria***

'They have not complied with the conditions on which the Lord of the whole earth granted to the first progenitors of our race this habitable world,' wrote Rev. T. Atkins in 1859. The Aborigines of Tasmania, he said, had failed to subdue the earth.

**John Harris**  
***One Blood***



Rightly or wrongly, dispossession of aboriginal civilisation was always going to happen. Those in the guilt industry have to consider that developing cultures and peoples will always overtake relatively stationary cultures. We have to be honest and acknowledge that aboriginal sense of nationhood or even infrastructure was not highly developed. At no stage did aboriginal civilisation develop substantial buildings, roadways, a wheeled cart as part of their different priorities or approach.

*Mabo* has the capacity to put a brake on Australian investment, break the economy and break up Australia – a brake, a break and a break-up we can well do without.

**Tim Fischer**  
**National Party Leader**  
**(Responding to the Mabo decision)**<sup>120</sup>

Land exists *for* particular use.

Which just happened to be the way those who wanted the land wanted to use it.

This reasoning is factually wrong in any number of ways.

The colonists arrived at a cultivated landscape; they just couldn't recognise it.<sup>121</sup> First Nations people can and do choose to 'develop' their lands in the colonial sense. In any case why do hunting and gathering and cultural ceremony not count but mining and sheep and cattle grazing do?

This reasoning has also been devastating for the natural world.

Since 1788, colonists have 'developed' the sea to the point of the near extinction of whales, the dramatic loss of fish and widespread plastic pollution. We have 'developed' land into salination and desertification. We have lost native species, drained rivers and polluted water sources.

In 1971, a cane farmer wanted to mine part of the Great Barrier Reef for cheap limestone fertiliser. Premier Joh Bjelke-Petersen instructed his mining minister to zone 80% of the reef for oil and gas mining and commissioned a report which said there were good oil-mining prospects and the dead reefs could then be used for cement manufacture.

The poet Judith Wright compared this last suggestion to bashing down the Taj Mahal for road gravel.<sup>122</sup>

Only serious protests prevented this. It turned out the Premier and his Ministers had invested heavily in the oil companies whose licenses they were assessing.<sup>123</sup>

What does it say about Australian values when a majority-elected government believed the highest value of the Great Barrier Reef was as limestone fertiliser and cement?

## QUESTIONS

How would Australians generally answer the question 'what is land for?'

How would you answer the question 'what is land for?'

How much of your life (time, energy, money, passion) goes on land?

## DISCUSSION

We each hold a bundle of values about what land is for.

Colonial Australia has tended to overvalue 'short-term profit for me' in that bundle of values.

In the course of many conversations, Aboriginal people were explaining that settlers saw the world primarily (if not exclusively) in terms of themselves and their cattle. They didn't think about anything else, not even the ecosystems that would have to thrive if they and their cattle were going to thrive. In the course of such conversations, another teacher, Riley Young, would ask: 'What's wrong with Whitefellas, they crazy or what?'

**Deborah Bird Rose**  
***Why I Don't Speak of Wilderness***

Justice Blackburn partly based his decision that Yolngu people could not 'own' land on the fact that they would not sell it, that is a key part of the Australian definition of property in land was being able to choose to get rid of it for cash.<sup>124</sup>



Colonial Australia has tended to undervalue 'connection to land' in that bundle of values.

Colonists, after all, had left their own lands behind.

I have always thought settler communities unique, they see new lands as something to be claimed, as places without a past. The people who come here have left history behind. Settlers look out; they look forward. The mark of success is to leave a better life for your children. Settlers prove how much they belong by how far they have travelled, how much they have acquired.

**Stan Grant**  
***Talking to My Country***

We could not even see, let alone value, how First Nations peoples were connected to land.

We still struggle to understand the depth of it.

*Apmereyanbe*, our language-Land, is like a root or tie to us. It holds all of us. The only way that we can translate into English how we see our relationship with the Land is with the words 'hold' and 'connect'. The roots of the country and its people are twined together. We are part of the Land. The Land *is* us, and we are the Land. That's how we hold our land.

And it's really important for our kids to know why we want our Land to live on, to go back to. Because we've got a strong tie to it. It's like a big twirl of string that holds us in there with our families. That's where all our culture, and our names, our skin names come from. That's why we hold a big treasure of Land for us. And we have a special name for that tie or string, it's called *utyerre*.

*Utyerre* can be like, *utyerre-arle*, you might say, "*utyerrengge aweke*, I'm hearing a message from that line". And that *utyerre* means a telephone. And when he's hearing on the telephone, that person can see – in his mind he knows it – what that line runs, they can see it, where the message's coming from, like a string. And *utyerre* also is like a vein in yourself, and in your country. And how you relate. One time I was talking to this person here, and I was describing it: "It's like when we used to dig yam. When you dig for yam, you find a yam, it's like a bean in there. But also there's another string coming from it that lays further down, that's *utyerre*. And when you follow that *utyerre* you find another yam". So that's how we call *utyerre*. It's like those lines that go straight and connect to this, and connect to this, and connect to this.

**Margaret Kemarre Turner OAM**  
***Iwenbe Tyerrtye – what it means to be an Aboriginal Person***  
***(MK Turner is an Arrernte elder, painter, writer, educator and translator currently living in Alice Springs)***



## SCRIPTURE

Now the man knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain, saying, 'I have produced a man with the help of the Lord.' Next she bore his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel for his part brought of the firstlings of his flock, their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. The Lord said to Cain, 'Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is lurking at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.'

Cain said to his brother Abel, 'Let us go out to the field.' And when they were in the field, Cain rose up against his brother Abel and killed him. Then the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is your brother Abel?' He said, 'I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?' And the Lord said, 'What have you done? Listen; your brother's blood is crying out to me from the ground! And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it will no longer yield to you its strength; you will be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth.' Cain said to the Lord, 'My punishment is greater than I can bear! Today you have driven me away from the soil, and I shall be hidden from your face; I shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth, and anyone who meets me may kill me.' Then the Lord said to him, 'Not so! Whoever kills Cain will suffer a sevenfold vengeance.' And the Lord put a mark on Cain, so that no one who came upon him would kill him. Then Cain went away from the presence of the Lord, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden.

*Genesis 4: 1-16*

There are some striking parallels between this ancient story and recent Australian history.

Our land *is* soaked with blood.

There is a restlessness and rootlessness that characterises modernity which could well be described as being a 'wanderer on the earth'.

How does this story speak into the Australian situation to you?

**Reread** the words of MK Turner.

Do you experience any of this yourself?  
Do you feel connected to land?

## DISCUSSION

We don't seem to talk about the theology of land all that much.

Which is strange as land is hugely important for most Australians.

A vast amount of people's time and money goes into their homes or into property investments.

Our love of home ownership has stood the test of time. It was remarked upon by Donald Horne, who wrote that 'the "home" occupies as central a position in Australian life as land in a peasant community except it is disposable after death'. The money from the posthumous sale goes to pay off the mortgages of your children, Horne explained.

**Rebecca Huntley**  
*Still Lucky*

And our natural environment is a large part of many of our lives.

Land is a very large part of what Australians do.

Land is also one of the dominant themes of Scripture.

How would you answer the question 'what is land for?' theologically?

This is a spirit country and we will all have to face the sacredness of the land

**David Mowaljarlai**<sup>125</sup>

Is land sacred or holy to you?

## QUESTIONS

The historian Lynn White published a controversial article in 1967 which claimed that by destroying traditional understandings of all living things as animated by spirit:

Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects...Hence we shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence except to serve man...Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not.

***The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis***  
***Science, 10 March 1967, Volume 155***

Do you agree with his understanding of Christianity?

Is Christianity at the root of our current ecological crisis? Why or why not?

Is the remedy to our current ecological crisis religious?



Image courtesy of Michael Leunig





## PRAY

God of all, God of grace, we give you thanks for this earth and this world in which we live.

We give you thanks for the beauty of your continuing creation.

Help us gracious God to be good stewards of your great gift.

Help us to learn from the old ones how to live on and in the lands and seas of this earth and continue to grow in sustainability and share its abundance for the good of all.

Help all of those affected by rising seas and changing weather.

Help all those who are forced from their homes because of these things to be able to find somewhere to live.

Help us all to be mindful that we are all created equal in your sight.

God of all our dreaming.  
Hear our prayer.

***The Reverend Canon Bruce Boase***  
***Member of NATSIAC***  
***Priest in Charge***  
***The Anglican Community of Green Hills***  
***Diocese of Brisbane***  
***The Anglican Church of Southern***  
***Queensland***  
***Intercessory Prayers for National***  
***Reconciliation Week 2014***

## GO DEEPER

Neither revolution nor reformation can ultimately change a society, rather you must tell a new powerful tale, one so persuasive that it sweeps away the old myths and becomes the preferred story, one so inclusive that it gathers all the bits of our past and our present into a coherent whole, one that even shines some light into our future so that we can take the next step... If you want to change a society, then you have to tell an alternative story.

***Ivan Illich***<sup>126</sup>

In a 1995 speech at Parliament House, Eugene Stockton said:

I see our nation as a gumtree, tall, smooth limbed and lightly leaved. Its roots reach out and draw goodness from soils throughout the Earth, feeding from a single trunk to a rich canopy of branches, leaves, flowers and fruit. From many soils and climes our people have come together and as the living tips of the tree we are now spread out into the clean air and bright sunlight of a new world above. We own all our roots, not only those ancestral to each individual, but also those which we share through our neighbours. One root, which is vital to the whole tree and all it bears, is the tap root which goes deep down into the soil of Australia.

Through the tap root of this multi-rooted tree, Australia can identify itself as a nation some 60,000 years old.

***Eugene Stockton***  
***Australia – My Vision***<sup>127</sup>

Do you like this metaphor? Why or why not?

At the moment we have a few stories  
that we tell over and over about what it  
is to be Australian.

I think they are true and they matter.

But they are collectively too narrow.

(And one of the main ones, the Anzac  
story, happened somewhere else entirely.)

We need to hear a much broader range  
of stories.

And in the telling and listening find a  
common story large enough to hold  
all of us; from First Nations people to  
those with Colonial heritage to the most  
recent arrival.

One thing we all have in common is  
this land.

What would it be like to have a shared  
Australian story that arose from the land?

How would we start to tell such a story?

---

118 <https://www.eternitynews.com.au/opinion/remembering-mabo-25-years-on/>

119 'Aborigines really only had the right to be consulted and it was not actually a property right, and that mining companies could still do what they wanted. I did not realise that the rights that had been won had a hell of a way to go to call them what most of us would think would be property rights.' Tracker Tilmouth in Alexis Wright, Tracker

120 <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-06-07/green-reflections-on-the-mabo-debate/4056156>

121 See Bill Gammage, The Biggest Estate on Earth: How Aborigines Made Australia

122 <https://theconversation.com/amp/great-barrier-reef-decision-is-a-u-turn-to-an-inglorious-past-21427>

123 Evan Whitton, The Hillbilly Dictator

124 I 'think that property, in its many forms, generally implies the right to use or enjoy, the right to exclude others, and the right to alienate...The right to alienate is expressly refuted by the plaintiffs in their statement of claim.' Justice Blackburn in Milirrpum v Nabalco Pty Ltd (the "Gove Land Rights Case") (1971) 17 FLR 141

125 As told to David Tacey, <http://earthsong.org.au/publications/journal/issue-1/issue-1-feature-article/>

126 "Storytelling or Myth-Making? Frank Viola and Ivan Illich," Proclamation, Invitation, & Warning, July, 2007

127 Aboriginal Church Paintings: Reflecting on our Faith









### **“A Portrait of Australia With Important Bits Missing”**

*Acrylic on canvas*

The story of Australia is a story told from the edges. It is a story that often leaves out important bits such as Tasmania, the deep north or the red centre and ignores the darker stories at the heart of the country's history. It is a story ignoring the story of the people who have lived here for some 50,000 years. There is much more to Australia than a story told from the perimeter.

# CONCLUSION

## A WOUND IN THE HEART OF THE NATION



It is where we are wounded that is  
when He speaks

*W H Auden*  
*The Age of Anxiety*

The question 'how can we solve 'the Aboriginal problem'' assumes black and white are entirely independent entities. They are not. Many Australians carry both heritages.

But in any case, all Australians have a closely linked history now.

White Australia's world-view has been formed in reaction to Indigenous Australia.

The twisted values that enabled one lot of people to dispossess another lot whilst feeling moral about are still active, just below the surface.

We have a shared wound and so we will have a shared healing.

When a group of disempowered people gather in the desert and call for right relationship, truth and justice it has a very prophetic feel.

If you smell injustice Christ is never  
far from that....

**Spencer Reece**  
***For All of You Are One***<sup>128</sup>

Scripturally, the desert is a place that brings  
us face to face with unpleasant realities.

But it is also a place of new creation.



I am about to do a new thing;  
now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?  
I will make a way in the wilderness  
and rivers in the desert.

***Isaiah 43:19***



Right relationship (or righteousness) is  
like truth and justice.

It is the way forward, in and of itself.

Pharaoh was all logic. The Israelite  
slaves were the foundation of his jobs  
and growth. He had the most powerful  
army in the ancient world.

When the disempowered cried out  
his response didn't take into account  
a miraculous sea crossing and the  
destruction of his whole army. Why  
would he? It wasn't in his ken.

A lot of Scripture is God breaking into  
limited fields in ways that make no sense  
by the terms of that field.

We don't know what Australia will be  
like if First Nations people are given  
a Constitutional Voice, if we start to  
recognise sovereignty by way of treaty,  
or if we commit ourselves to tell the truth.

The *Statement from the Heart* lays out a  
way not an end-point.

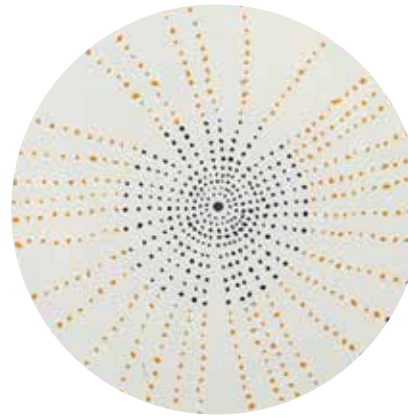
We leave base camp and start our trek across  
this vast country. We invite you to walk with  
us in a movement of the Australian people  
for a better future.

***Statement from the Heart***

LISTEN<sup>129</sup>  
***One Blood***  
***Yothu Yindi***







## PRAY

Lord God, bring us together as one,  
reconciled with you and reconciled  
with each other.

You made us in your likeness,  
you gave us your Son, Jesus Christ.

He has given us forgiveness from sin.

Lord God, bring us together as one,  
different in culture, but given new  
life in Jesus Christ,  
together as your body, your Church,  
your people.

Lord God, bring us together as one,  
reconciled, healed, forgiven,  
sharing you with others as you have  
called us to do.

In Jesus Christ, let us be together as one.

**Amen.**

*A Prayer for Reconciliation  
by Bishop Arthur and  
Mrs Colleen Malcolm  
(Bishop Arthur is a Life Member  
of NAISLAC)  
A Prayer Book for Australia*

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128 <http://www.anglicantheologicalreview.org/static/pdf/articles/rece.pdf>

129 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHuMvm\\_dM-o](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hHuMvm_dM-o)



# APPENDIX 1

## The constitutional recognition context

by

**Dr Carolyn Tan**

*Dr Carolyn Tan is the Chair of the General Synod Public Affairs Commission. She is a lawyer practicing mainly in Native Title law, and has completed a PhD on the inadequacies of Western legal categories across Australia, New Zealand, USA and Canada for dealing with Indigenous understandings of Sacred Space.*

The *Statement from the Heart* followed, and was part of several years of, consultations and reports on the issue of constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, the First Nations. Such recognition was aimed at correcting the huge omission in the Australian Constitution when it comes to the First Nations. A summary outline of that history is set out below.

### 1901 Australian Constitution

The original Australian Constitution was created without involvement of the First Nations. It contains no mention of the original owners of the lands and waters other than to:

- (a) exclude “aboriginal natives” from census or population counts at Commonwealth or State level (s127) and,
- (b) deny the Commonwealth Parliament the power to make laws with respect to the people of “the aboriginal race”. This was in the context of giving the Commonwealth the power in s51(xxvi) to make laws for the people of any race for whom it is deemed necessary to make special laws, but this power expressly excluded “the aboriginal race”. The States retained the power to make laws for Aboriginal people and did so in some infamous pieces of legislation.

### 1967 Referendum

It was not until the referendum of 1967 that s127 was removed, enabling First Nations People to be “counted” in the census and population counts. That referendum also deleted the words “other than the aboriginal race in any State” from s51(xxvi), meaning that the Commonwealth Parliament’s power to make laws in respect of the people of any race included Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This power enabled the power to make Commonwealth laws dealing with such things as with Aboriginal heritage and native title.

### Constitutional Recognition - Expert Panel 2010-2012

In 2007, then Prime Minister John Howard announced that his government wanted to see a statement of reconciliation incorporated into the preamble of the Australian Constitution. The Gillard government subsequently announced its desire to pursue recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in the Australian Constitution. In December 2010, then

Prime Minister Julia Gillard appointed an Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Indigenous Australians to consult the community and report on options on ways of bringing about such constitutional recognition.

The Expert Panel consulted widely and received many submissions. There was majority support in the submissions for constitutional recognition and to remove discriminatory provisions. Many church groups supported such change for theological reasons. The joint submission of the Public Affairs Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia, Anglican Board of Mission, the Social Responsibilities bodies of Perth, Sydney and Adelaide can be found at [www.anglican.org.au/data/7.1\\_SC2016-170\\_Attachment\\_3\\_PAC\\_Sub\\_119\\_to\\_Joint\\_select\\_committee\\_March\\_2015.pdf](http://www.anglican.org.au/data/7.1_SC2016-170_Attachment_3_PAC_Sub_119_to_Joint_select_committee_March_2015.pdf)

In January 2012, the Expert Panel provided its report to the government. The report can be found at <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resource-centre/indigenous-affairs/final-report-expert-panel-recognising-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-constitution>



The main items recommended by the Expert Panel for amendments to the Constitution were in summary:

- The removal of s25 which contemplates States disqualifying people from voting on the basis of their race;
- The removal of the Commonwealth power in s51(xxvi) to make laws with respect to “race”;
- The insertion of a new power to the Commonwealth to make laws with respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (as s51A), with a preamble in that section dealing with recognition, respect and acknowledgement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and their culture, languages, heritage, relationships with land and waters etc.;
- The insertion of a clause prohibiting racial discrimination but allowing for laws to overcome disadvantage and to protect the cultural heritage of any group (in a new s116A);
- The insertion of a new s127A to recognise English as the national

language but to acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages as the original Australian languages and part of our national heritage.

The recommendation that gave rise to the most debate was the proposed clause prohibiting racial discrimination. It had been criticised as creating a “one-clause bill of rights”. While there is a Commonwealth *Racial Discrimination Act*, this is not constitutionally-entrenched and can be overridden in subsequent Commonwealth legislation. Examples where the *Racial Discrimination Act* has been limited or overridden include the legislation setting up the Northern Territory Intervention and the Native Title Act. A clause prohibiting racial discrimination, however, could have been the clause with the greatest legal impact as the other changes recommended were mainly symbolic.

### From Expert Panel report to Referendum Council: 2012 - 2015

The process of constitutional amendment is a difficult one. It requires a bill for a referendum to be passed by Parliament and the referendum then has to be agreed to by a majority of electors in a majority of States. It also requires an overall majority of all electors in Australia. Very few referenda have succeeded through Australia’s history due to these difficulties. Multi-party support and a public education campaign is usually essential for a referendum to pass.

The Commonwealth government invested substantial monies in the public education campaign through the Recognise campaign to advocate for constitutional recognition. As it was unclear what would be included in any referendum question, the campaign had to be about general awareness raising concerning the need for change.

A Parliamentary Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

Peoples was set up to and gave a final report in June 2015. This Committee recommended a referendum on constitutional recognition but only when it had the highest chance of success. It recommended the less controversial aspects of the Expert Panel report, namely the removal of the s25 (providing for States to disqualify people from voting on the basis of race), the removal of the “race” power and the retention of a power of the Commonwealth to make laws in respect of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. It did not, however, decide on the most difficult aspects and recommended 3 options for further consideration. These ranged from a general prohibition on racial discrimination to a prohibition on the Commonwealth Parliament making laws that discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to a prohibition on any laws (Commonwealth, State or Territory) that discriminated against Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

In July 2015, the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition met with 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

leaders from around the country at Kirribilli. The First Nations Peoples at the meeting made it clear that substantive change to lay the foundation for fair treatment in the future was essential and mere symbolic changes to remove s25 and the “race” power would not be acceptable. The meeting agreed on a series of community consultations and the establishment of a Referendum Council to progress issues and make recommendations on further steps.

### Regional Dialogues and other consultations: 2017

The Referendum Council facilitated a series of 12 regional dialogues designed and led by First Nations people. These took place around the country and about 1,200 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples were engaged in the process. They canvassed the proposals discussed in the Expert Panel report and the additional proposal of a First Nations’ Voice to Parliament. Other proposals were able to be raised at the meetings.

According to the Referendum Council report, the dialogues showed little appetite for the symbolic changes

like removing the “dead” section s25 or the “race” power. Statements of constitutional recognition were rejected as likely to be a bland statement incompatible with fulsome truth-telling. Also as most delegates would maintain that sovereignty was never ceded, there was thought to be little benefit from being acknowledged in a constitution and there were concerns that such an acknowledgement may impact on assertions of sovereignty.

The prohibition on racial discrimination won support in several of the dialogues but there were fears that this might not be politically palatable enough to succeed in a referendum.

The option that had support across all the dialogues was to have a First Nations Voice to Parliament and this was the option that forms the key recommendation of the *Statement from the Heart* and Referendum Council report. The nature of this body is discussed below.

The second most supported reform was for a treaty or agreement-making which would allow communities to negotiate as equals. Models of such agreement making

included the treaty processes being worked through in Victoria and South Australia as well as native title related agreements. Such a model is consistent with sovereignty and treating First Nations as distinct nations able to make agreements about their lands and waters.

Truth-telling also emerged in the dialogues as an important part of any reform. This was about the true history of the impacts of colonisation as well as the significant contribution First Nations people have made to building up the country.

The key Guiding principles emerging from the dialogues were that any proposal must:

- not diminish Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty;
- involve substantive and structural reform;
- advance self-determination and the standards under the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
- recognise the status and rights of First Nations;
- tell the truth of history;
- not foreclose on future advancement;

- not waste the opportunity of reform;
- provide a mechanism for First Nations agreement-making;
- have the support of First Nations;
- not interfere with positive legal arrangements.

The dialogues culminated in the National Constitutional Convention at Uluru from 23 to 26 May 2017. Over 250 delegates attended. It was here that the *Statement from the Heart* was issued.

In addition to the regional dialogues, the Referendum Council also set up an online platform to enable submissions from the wider public and conducted numerous surveys and also engaged through social media. There were over 1000 submissions and over 195,000 people engaged in online discussions. The submissions and surveys showed strong support for a Voice to Parliament and also the other options for reform as well.

## Referendum Council Report and First Nations Voice

The Referendum Council gave its final report on 30 June 2017. The full report can be found here:

<https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/final-report>

It recommended:

- That a referendum be held to provide in the Constitution for a representative body that gives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples a Voice into Parliament. The functions of the body would be set out in legislation outside the Constitution and such functions should include monitoring the use of the race power and the Territories power.
- A Declaration of Recognition in legislation outside the Constitution that could be enacted by all Australian Parliaments on the same day. This could bring together the First Nations' heritage and culture, the British institutions and the multicultural unity.

While it was outside its terms of reference, the Referendum Council

also noted the call for a Makarrata Commission to supervise the process of agreement or treaty making and facilitating the process of truth-telling.

The nature of the Voice to Parliament was left to Parliament to formulate but key points were that:

- It should be representative of and have legitimacy within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia.
- The legislation would need to formulate what matters need to be referred to the Voice. It would be too much to refer all matters that may affect First Nations People as all legislation may. However, it would possibly be too narrow to limit this to laws relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples because there may be general laws that affect them more than others.
- There was no suggestion that it would have any right of veto or be required to approve any legislation. It would not limit the power of Parliament to pass discriminatory legislation. It would provide First Nations' input and advice on legislation that concerns them.

The recommended body therefore would not function in any way as a third chamber of Parliament.

In order to prevent its role, albeit limited, from simply being overridden by later Parliaments, the Council recommended that it be constitutionally entrenched. Such a provision in the Constitution would also give some formal Constitutional recognition of the special place of First Nations Peoples.

The Council noted that to be effective such a body has to have a budget and access to a secretariat, experts and consultants.

The Council concluded that this proposal was “modest, reasonable, unifying and capable of attracting the necessary support of the Australian people.”



# APPENDIX Z

## Anglican responses to the statement from the heart

The Anglican Church of Australia General Synod passed the following resolution in September 2017:

*Dr Carolyn Tan moving, The Very Rev'd Peter Catt seconding*

*The General Synod:*

- 1. Supports the recommendation of the Referendum Council for a constitutionally-entrenched First Nations' Voice to the Commonwealth Parliament;*
- 2. Encourages the governments in Australia to seek to negotiate in good faith with First Nations' Peoples towards treaties or other similar forms of agreement;*
- 3. Requests the General Secretary to convey this resolution to the Prime Minister, State Premiers, and Leaders of the Opposition;*

*4. Requests the Public Affairs Commission in consultation with NATSIAC to prepare resources, including summaries and theological reflections for use by Anglican parishes, schools and organisations, on the Referendum Council Report on any subsequent referendum questions and on the progress of treaty or similar negotiations.*

During their meeting from 4-11 October 2017 the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council discussed the *Statement from the Heart* and agreed to the following recommendation:

*The Gathering recommends to the Executive that it inform ABM, Diocesan Bishops and the Federal Government of its support for the Uluru Statement*

On 26 October 2017, Prime Minister Turnbull released a statement rejecting the call for a Constitutional Voice:

<https://www.pm.gov.au/media/response-referendum-council's-report-constitutional-recognition>

On 5 November 2017, a group of eminent Australians, led by Prof Fiona Stanley and Cassandra Goldie (ACOSS) released a [Joint statement of support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart.](#)

Anglican signatories included Archbishop Philip Freier as Primate, Dean Peter Catt, on behalf of the Public Affairs Commission (PAC) and Anglican Board of Mission Executive Director, John Deane.

(Individuals and groups can still sign it)

On 6 November 2017 the Anglican Primate of Australia, Melbourne Archbishop Philip Freier, released a statement expressing his disappointment in the Federal Government's decision and urging them to reconsider:

<http://www.anglicanprimate.org.au/press/pm-please-think-again/>

On 8 November 2017, the Anglican Board of Mission released a Statement in support of the Constitutional Voice, citing Bishop Chris McLeod, the National Aboriginal Bishop:

*Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples from around Australia are deeply disappointed and saddened by the government's insensitive and short sighted actions.*

*We regard it as another example of some non-Indigenous people, especially government, showing complete disregard for the aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, and many non-Indigenous Australians as well.*

*The government's actions have done deep damage to the cause of reconciliation in this land. We pray and hope for a change of mind.*

<https://www.abmission.org/news.php/376/anglicans-call-for-constitutionally-entrenched-first-nations-voice>









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