



ANGLICAN BOARD OF MISSION

Working for Love, Hope & Justice

Thursday, November 9, 2017

Anglicans call for Constitutionally-entrenched First Nations Voice

In May 2017 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from across Australia gathered to discuss the recognition of Australia's First Peoples in our Constitution. This National Constitutional Convention was the culmination of years of work and activism, and comprehensive consultations in cities and towns around the country.

It was the first time in Australia's history that such a process had been undertaken. It resulted in the release of the one-page *Uluru Statement from the Heart* in which delegates lamented the torment of their powerlessness and called for a First Nations Voice, protected by the Constitution.

The Referendum Council, a group of eminent Australians appointed by the Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition, undertook an additional broader community consultation. In June 2017 they issued a Final Report supporting the call and stating in part: *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.*

With guidance from the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council (NATSIAC) and the National Aboriginal Bishop, ABM and the Anglican Church of Australia have thrown their support behind a constitutionally-entrenched First Nations Voice.

ABM is disappointed that the Turnbull Government has refused to explore this recommendation by the Referendum Council.

Bishop Chris McLeod, the National Aboriginal Bishop, said, "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," he said.

ABM's Reconciliation Coordinator Celia Kemp said, "The reasons set out in the Prime Minister's response are deeply inadequate. This dismissive rejection of the considered voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples after such an extensive consultation only highlights the need for a constitutionally-entrenched voice."

The Anglican Board of Mission (ABM) is the national mission agency of the Anglican Church of Australia. For over 160 years ABM has been assisting people all over the world to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, provide health and education services, improve agricultural practices and strengthen the Church.



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“The Uluru Statement is unprecedented in the scope of consultation, the unity of response and the moral weight of its call. It has created a unique opportunity for Australians to unite behind meaningful Constitutional change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples,” she said.

ABM is calling for the Government to reconsider its position and to work together with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to draft a reform proposal for a constitutionally-entrenched voice that can be put to the Australian People.

**For further information contact Celia Kemp, ABM’s Reconciliation Coordinator on 03 8899 6480
or Elizabeth Baker, ABM Media Consultant at media@abm.asn.au.**

High res image attached to email for your use.

Caption for Painting: Pathways by Robyn Davis (c) Robyn Davis 2017, used with permission

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