

*Gift...Truth...Recognition*

23 March 2023

Dear Friends,

I am nothing other than an Australian. My forebears came from other places, but I am of this country. I am Australian. As an Australian I am astounded by the gift given me by those who have been on this country long before I arrived. Even though our country's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have long been denied a voice, they continually use what voice they have to offer fellowship and reconciliation. We are invited to be of one blood.

Given our history this is a precious gift.

I write as an Australian responding to this gift. I write also as a child of God whose Son, Jesus, came as truth incarnate. As one who has benefited from the freedom which flows from the truth Jesus brings, I cannot enjoy the freedom while refusing to acknowledge the reality of the dispossession of those first entrusted with this country. This reality is compounded by national structures which do not provide forums for the country's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a voice. Yet, we have a new opportunity to walk in truth as children of God even as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have offered fellowship. They have done this through the [‘Statement from the Heart’](#), and the [‘Masig Statement’](#).

I am excited by the promise recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people holds. To recognise an individual speaks of their value as a fellow image-bearer of God. To recognise a people is the first step in acting on this value. I want to say to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, ‘I see you; you matter, I recognise you.’

While there are many opinions as to how this should be done, I will be acting on this value by voting to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our nation's constitution and to establish a permanent voice to parliament. For without hearing a people's voice how can I say I really recognise them. I encourage you to do the same.

We have been given a great gift as Australians. To recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is the first step in being a people of truth, and through truth freedom comes.

Your servant in Christ,



Bishop Matt Brain

*If you want to know more about the coming referendum and how it relates to the Statement from the Heart you can find good materials at [RedShoesWalking](#). These are produced by the Chair of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council (NATSIAC) Rev Canon Assoc Prof Uncle Glenn Loughrey.*