



4 June 2020

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The June 2019 Synod of the Diocese of Grafton moved a motion encouraging all Ministry Units in the Diocese to use an **Acknowledgement of Country** in liturgies, websites and printed material. I encourage you to think about how and when you Acknowledge Country. Other ways you can Acknowledge Country include: at the beginning of meetings (Parish Council, AGM, Bible Studies), and at other Parish Functions such as dinners or breakfasts.

The Rev'd Lenore Parker has been introducing me to indigenous elders in the Northern Rivers. I have found this to be very enriching and I have gained so much from hearing their stories, learning about culture and listening to their perspective on current challenges for our communities. There may be opportunities for you to make contact with local indigenous elders in your area. If you haven't already done so, you could invite them along to an event to offer a *Welcome to Country*.

The Synod also called on the people of the diocese to familiarise ourselves with the **Uluru Statement from the Heart** (see the next page). The Uluru Statement from the Heart is an invitation from Australia's Indigenous peoples to "walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future". It calls for structural reform including constitutional change. Structural reform means establishing a new relationship between First Nations and the Australian nation based on justice and self-determination where Indigenous cultures and peoples can flourish, and we all move forward. If you haven't already visited the website <https://ulurustatement.org/> it is well worth a visit. The statement is explained, and there are a lot of other excellent resources.

I hope you can use this excellent **video** in your parish life, in order to increase awareness of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the journey of truth and reconciliation: <https://vimeo.com/346347606>

Finally, I am pleased to announce that The Rev'd Daryl McCullough has accepted my invitation to be our Grafton Representative on the **National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Anglican Council**. Daryl is a Wiradjuri man who has spent his life seeking to serve the Aboriginal community and fight racism and inequality in its various forms. He has previously served on the NATSIAC as either an elected member or bishop's appointment since 2013, and during that time has served 6 years on the committee's executive as secretary. Daryl also serves on the steering committee of the Anglican Indigenous Network (AIN), which is the Anglican Communion's representative network for Indigenous peoples from across the worldwide communion and in that role was invited to present at this year's Lambeth Conference before the event was cancelled due to Covid-19. He has also represented the national church on Indigenous issues at the National Council of Churches Australia (NCCA) National Forum and presented at international conferences on the church and mission with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. From this we can conclude that the Diocese of Grafton will be well represented on the NATSIAC and we give thanks to God that Daryl is prepared to serve in this way.

Yours in Christ,

+Murray

A panel from a series of paintings by Frances Belle Parker that hangs in Grafton Cathedral reminds us that we walk on country that has long been sacred to the indigenous peoples of the North Coast.

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ULURU 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.

ulurustatement.org

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