

POSITION STATEMENT – First Nations

The Uniting Church covenant relationship with First Peoples is at the heart of our church, and we will listen and walk together. We stand as a family in Christ across our state and call for truth telling and justice for the First Nations peoples of these lands. Through our Covenant, First Peoples' sovereignty is affirmed, and they are empowered to live out their right to self-determination. We will rightfully listen for the voice of First Nations peoples in the decision-making of the Church.

In the words of 1988's Bicentennial Statement to the Nation, we recognise our nation's history of injustice and the "continuing experience of violence and injustice" for First Nations people in Australia. We continue to call for truth telling in education and the media, in the church and in political discourse. We must continue to be brave in hearing the sometimes uncomfortable truth about Australia's history, seeking justice, healing, and reconciliation.

In 2010, we became the first church in Australia to constitutionally acknowledge Aboriginal and Islander people as the First Peoples of Australia. The Church's national constitution was amended to affirm that "As the Church believes God guided it into union so it believes that God is calling it to continually seek a renewal of its life as a community of First Peoples and of Second Peoples from many lands".

The Queensland Synod upholds the sovereignty of First Nations peoples as described in the Uluru Statement from the Heart, as a "spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land...and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples" and acknowledge that this sovereignty "has never been ceded or extinguished and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown".

We recognise too that First Peoples have the knowledge and experience needed to deliver practical changes to their communities, and that it is both fair and just that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across all lands should have a voice in the laws and policies that directly affect them.

We stand with members of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) and others across the Uniting Church in Australia to advocate for policies ensuring high rates of early childhood education, school attendance and completion among First Nations students. We call for First Nations languages to be preserved, taught, and incorporated into civic functions and for First Nations cultures to be understood and celebrated by all Australians.

We advocate significant and consistent resourcing for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled health, child and family and wellbeing services, designed to achieve a closing of the gap in health, and social outcomes. We also call for effective, culturally appropriate, and evidence-based policies and intersectional programs to significantly reduce incarceration of First

Nations peoples and to address the over-representation of First Nations families in child protection systems. We call for co-created adaptations to the ways we approach youth justice and healing for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their families.

The Synod offices in Brisbane are located on the lands of the Jagara and Turrbal Peoples and we give thanks for and acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of Country wherever the people of our Synod live and work across the whole of Queensland.

The Queensland Synod pays respect to the First Nations Elders past, present and emerging across our state. They are the holders of knowledge, tradition, story, and culture and we seek to learn from them and work with them in the spirit of reconciliation.



Rev Bruce Moore

Moderator