

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.



More than 250 Indigenous delegates met near Uluru in May to talk about changes to Australia's constitution.

At 12 regional talks around the country before the Uluru meeting delegates discussed five possible changes: to acknowledge Indigenous peoples in the constitution, to give them a voice to parliament, to change the 'race power' so governments can't use it to cause harm, to ban racial discrimination, and treaty.

At Uluru, the delegates agreed on three priorities - a voice to parliament, treaty and truth-telling. They also considered a roadmap to get to these goals.

WHAT DO THESE THINGS MEAN?

Voice to Parliament - including in the constitution a new Indigenous body advising the Australian Parliament. It would force politicians to listen to Indigenous peoples before they make laws that affect them. Being in the constitution means this body could not be abolished without a referendum. Indigenous peoples from across Australia would elect representatives for this new body.

Treaty - a long-standing demand of Indigenous peoples. A 'Makarrata Commission' would guide agreement-making between them and governments.

Truth-telling - the 'Makarrata Commission' would also make sure that the true history of colonisation is finally told: the massacres, the wars and the ongoing injustices and discrimination.

PRIORITIES FROM THE CENTRAL AUSTRALIAN MEETING AT ROSS RIVER

The delegation from Central Australia supports the Uluru Statement, however it is worried that some important Territory issues have been forgotten.

The Territory is ruled by the NT Self-Government Act and Australian laws. The constitution's 'territories power' allows the Australian Government to make laws for the NT. This means it has a lot of power to make laws that apply only to the Territory.

Delegates at Ross River supported a constitutional guarantee to protect treaties and joining the race power with the voice to Parliament. They also strongly supported a ban on racial discrimination to prevent racist laws across Australia.



WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

At Uluru, each region elected two people to a national working group. Barb Shaw and Vince Forrester (pictured right and with NT delegates and supporters below) represent Central Australia. The working group will implement a roadmap for the Uluru Statement. The Referendum Council will provide a report to the parliament on 30 June. Constitutional reform will also be discussed at the Garma Festival in east Arnhem Land in August.



FOR MORE INFORMATION
CALL THE CLC ON
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