



Australia's First Peoples' Voice

"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."

(1 Corinthians 12:26–27)

(1) As an expression of the unity of churches and councils of Asia, the CCA General Assembly affirms that we are together the Body of Christ. When one part of the body is in pain, the whole body shares in and experiences the pain. We hear the cry and feel the pain of the First Peoples of Australia and in all parts of Asia. We have been guided in making this statement by Indigenous Australians who are part of the Assembly.

(2) We recognise that the struggles faced by indigenous peoples are not confined by geographical borders, but are universal in their call for recognition, empowerment, and reconciliation. In this spirit of solidarity and faith, the 15th General Assembly of the Christian Conference of Asia presents this statement on the issue of Australia's First Peoples referendum and voice, reaffirming our unwavering commitment to accompanying the indigenous peoples of Asia and beyond on their collective journey towards justice and reconciliation.

(3) Australians will vote on 14 October on whether to amend the Australian constitution to:

- Recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the indigenous peoples of Australia, in Australia's 122-year-old constitution as being the first peoples of Australia; and
- Establish a Voice, an advisory committee of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people that would give advice to the parliament and the Australian government about matters that affect indigenous Australians' lives, so that governments make better decisions.

(4) The CCA, as a movement that strives for the flourishing of all peoples, including the rights of, and justice for, indigenous peoples, and is sensitised to the impact of colonialism, especially on First Nations people, affirms that the proposed Voice is a request from the Uluru Statement from the Heart, which is a gracious invitation from indigenous Australians to all other Australians to walk together in seeking to empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders in their own lands, and notes that:

- Action is long overdue in Australia: which is one of the few settler-colonised countries in the world lacking a national treaty with its First Nations; and
- Australia is a nation that officially observes a date marking the arrival of settler-colonisers as the celebratory day of its national foundation. Australia Day is a solemn and traumatic day for indigenous Australians and all those in solidarity with them and in this way this disregards 65,000+ years of living, continuous cultures.

(5) We, the churches in Asia, together with member churches in Australia that include Indigenous Australians as well as peoples in solidarity with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders:

- Urge the Asian Diaspora in Australia to support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and to vote in favour of enshrining a Voice to Parliament for the First Peoples of the land now called Australia;
- Encourage CCA member constituencies and organisations to continue raising awareness and engagement among their local communities, especially those with links to Australia, in relation to the ongoing struggle for indigenous Australians' self-determination; and
- Encourage the CCA to continue to stand in solidarity with First Peoples and indigenous peoples across Asia.