



OLSH

Hearts for Others



WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART?

Both sides of the current 'argument'

Indigenous Australians have been calling for a voice to parliament since 2017. In his speech on election night on 22nd May, 2022, the new Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, committed the Australian Labor party to implementing the Uluru Statement from the Heart "in full." He has also called the Uluru Statement a "modest and gracious" request by First Nation's people. This

has rejuvenated hopes that there may now be progress on the Statement's demands. More recently he has vowed to hold a referendum during his first term in office, with commentators suggesting this will most likely be in mid-2024, or even 2023.

Minister for Indigenous Affairs, Linda Burney, recently said, "Australians are more than ready for the discussion about a voice to parliament... It's time we put the discussion at the centre of our national discourse and took it to a vote." While Federal Opposition leader, Peter Dutton, says the Liberal party will finalise its position on the referendum early next year, citing "building bewilderment" at the lack of detail around



the Voice to Parliament, the Nationals' leader, David Littleproud, recently announced that his party will oppose a referendum to enshrine an Indigenous Voice in the constitution as the party did not believe the Voice would "genuinely close the gap." In addition, the Greens have a policy of 'treaty first.' Their position arises from the fact that no treaty between traditional owners and colonisers has ever been negotiated, so First Nations' sovereignty has never been ceded; therefore, they maintain, constitutional reform is not a priority.

WA Labor Senator Pat Dodson, who serves as Special Envoy for Reconciliation and the Implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, said in his recent address to the Lay Chevalier Family, that legislating an advisory voice on matters that affect Indigenous people would address what took place during the colonisation of Australia and the "lie" of *Terra Nullius*, which enabled the continued dispossession and subjugation of Aboriginal people over the years. "We are," he said, "at the cusp of recognition of our First Nations," with an important opportunity to be open and respectful as we set about the restitution that is required when an injustice has occurred.

What is the position of Australian Churches?

In 2021 the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference endorsed the Uluru Statement from the Heart, condemning the treatment of Indigenous Australians, who have been driven "to become aliens, exiles and refugees in their own land." The Church has also committed to acknowledging "in a prominent and appropriate manner the Traditional Custodians of the land" in each diocese, and "symbols and rituals" of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders will now be considered for Catholic liturgy. The Church also apologised to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for "the part played by the Church in the harms they have suffered" and committed to working towards "recognition, reconciliation and justice." Catholic Weekly, July 6, 2022

Australia's Anglican, Catholic and Uniting Churches are among the religious groups who have signed a Joint Resolution calling for "bipartisan action" and no more delay for a constitutionally guaranteed First Nations voice, as a "necessary, right and reasonable" path to justice. Other groups who have signed the resolution include the national representative bodies for Australia's Muslim, Jewish, Sikh, Buddhist and Hindu communities.

WHAT WE KNOW

- A simple YES/NO question will be asked
- A Voice to Parliament would have a Constitutional guarantee
- The Voice will provide advice only to Parliament and Government
- Parliament will decide the structure of the Voice.
- The DRAFT referendum question is: Do you support an alteration to the Constitution that establishes an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice?

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

- More information on the proposal will follow. All Australians will know what they are voting on
- The government will outline key elements of the Voice by the end of 2022
- It is important that all Australians are involved in learning more about the Voice
- There will be ample time for all Australians to understand what they are voting on

Source: [fromtheheart.com.au](https://www.fromtheheart.com.au), 2022



THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART AND HEART SPIRITUALITY

In his reflection on the parable of the Good Samaritan, Claude Mostowik MSC writes about the importance of ceasing to promote the survival of unjust structures through 'radical compassion and true humanity,' a view that can be easily applied to the call for support from our Indigenous sisters and brothers. Heart Spirituality, he says, should open us to advocacy and strengthen us for the biblical call to care:

There are no special rules. Prayer and compassion respond to need, not rubrics. Where do we find our neighbour? The parable provides some important lesson about charity; it also raises questions relating to the promotion of justice. At what point would we do more than offer short-term help for victims? At what point would we begin to critique the political and economic agendas of those in power who allow injustice to continue? The Good Samaritan would not only show love for the 'other' through momentary acts of charity, but also through sustained advocacy for the promotion of a

common good and work to prevent people from being victimised in the first place. (July 2, 2022)

Speaking recently to a gathering of the Laity of the Chevalier Family at St Mary's Towers, Douglas Park NSW, Senator Pat Dodson spoke of the "magnificent connection" between Heart Spirituality and the Uluru Statement, which was "not only from the centre of Australia, but from the hearts of the First Nations of this country, inviting Australians to walk with them" in rectifying a matter of injustice. (September, 2022)

Reflection, discussion and sharing:

- **Why should Indigenous sovereignty matter to me as a follower of Jesus?**
- **What "magnificent connection/s" do you see between Heart Spirituality and the Uluru Statement from the Heart?**
- **What particular challenges or inspiration do I hear in the Uluru Statement from the Heart as an Australian and as a member of the family of Jules Chevalier, living out his charism and mission?**

