



Uniting Church in Australia National Assembly

Media Release

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UNITING CHURCH SUPPORTS CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

The Uniting Church in Australia believes that today's report from the Expert Panel on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People signals a landmark opportunity in our journey towards reconciliation. It is a necessary step following the moving apology delivered by the then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, in February 2008.

President of the Church, Rev. Alistair Macrae, said, 'We welcome the release of the Report and congratulate the members of the Panel for their work. The directions suggested offer a significant opportunity for us, as a nation, to recognise and honour the identity of the First Peoples.'

'In 1994, the Uniting Church formally apologised for its complicity in the injustices that led to the First Peoples being dispossessed of their land, their language, their culture and their spirituality.'

'The apology to First Peoples was the catalyst for the Uniting Church to engage in its own process of Constitutional change. We now have a Preamble which speaks honestly about our past and looks forward with hope to our future. It has enabled us to imagine our new shared destiny together,' said Rev. Macrae.

Rev. Ken Sumner, the National Chairperson of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, said, 'We are pleased that the Panel is recommending the removal of the race powers provisions. These provisions have served as a reminder of shameful aspects of Australia's history.'

'We urge the Government to ensure that an extensive public education and awareness campaign is conducted prior to the calling of a Referendum. This will ensure that all Australians are aware of the importance and value of Constitutional recognition of the First Peoples for everyone in our society,' said Rev. Sumner.

'In the bipartisan spirit of the beginnings of this process, I sincerely hope all parties will support these recommendations. The dignity of recognition afforded by Constitutional change will allow for the continued building of a relationship based on truth-telling and justice. It will provide for us a strong foundation for continuing our journey towards a just and reconciled nation,' said Rev. Macrae.

Please call Amy Goodhew on 0421 785 488 or 02 8267 4227 for further information.

National Communications Unit: 02 8267 4227