



A response to listening to First Nations people

Baptist Mission Australia has for many years sought to respect and value the unique cultures, histories, languages and achievements of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities. We have sought to listen and learn from First Nations people, and journey together in pursuing the ways of Jesus.

We know that despite our best efforts we have made mistakes and we see the need for an ongoing humble, learning, and curious posture, as we seek to build positive Christ-like relationships with First Nations people and communities. We're committed to standing alongside Christian First Nations leaders and faith communities as together we embody, by word and deed, the reconciling good news of Jesus.

Baptist Mission Australia recognises the ongoing injustice, disadvantage and racism faced by many First Nations people and we seek to play our part in supporting genuine and practical reconciliation initiatives. As followers of Jesus, we are called to be bearers of justice, not just in our words, but in our actions.

For many years, our organisation has sought to listen deeply to First Nations people.

Listening and a commitment to reconciliation go hand in hand. Over recent years, we have heard the strong and warm invitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, expressed in the Uluru Statement of the Heart, to *"walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future"*.

Having embraced this invitation, Baptist Mission Australia supports the recommendations expressed in the Uluru Statement, developed after an extensive First Nations led consultation process. These recommendations include the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution and a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations people and truth-telling about our history.

As we have listened to First Nations people, they have spoken strongly of the need for a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament, which will enable them to have a clear voice into decisions that impact their lives, communities, lands and aspirations. They have highlighted that the Voice is a pivotal step toward the full implementation of the Uluru Statement and so we see the planned referendum represents an historic opportunity for our nation to create a more just future.

As an agency serving our Australian Baptist movement, we appreciate it is the responsibility of every local church to seek the mind of Christ for its life and mission. Consequently, we acknowledge that not all local churches, individual partners or team members may agree with our organisational position.

But we would urge all churches and followers of Jesus to carefully listen to First Nations people and consider this historic opportunity to pursue a more just future in Australia.

Beyond these important reconciliation and justice issues, Baptist Mission Australia will continue to practically serve alongside First Nations people across Australia. This includes our ministry in outback communities in the Northern Territory and the imminent appointment of a First Nations Specialist to our National Team. Through these and other initiatives we will continue to foster holistic missional and justice initiatives and support the development of First Nations leaders.

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Committed to reconciliation, Baptist Mission Australia acknowledges and pays respect to the past, present and future Traditional Custodians and Elders of this nation and their connection to land, sea and community and all that the creator God gifted to them. We pay our respect to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.