

**Communiqué regarding the Uluru Statement from the Heart
Far North Queensland
May 2019**

“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.”

– Uluru Statement from the Heart, 26 May 2017

On the second anniversary of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, First Nations representatives from across the country met in Cairns and gathered at the Tree of Knowledge in Yarrabah, to renew the invitation forged at Uluru.

We pay tribute to the men and women whose heroic efforts led to the successful 1967 Referendum 52 years ago. We met with two of those heroes – Ms Ruth Hennings, aged 85, and Mr Alf Neal, aged 94 – both of whom were awarded the Order of Australia in 2019 for their services to our people.

We thank the growing movement of Australians from all walks of life who have pledged their support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart. This is a movement that is growing and will continue to grow.

Australia has an opportunity to honour and build upon the legacy of 1967. The Australian people united then and we can do it again.

We welcome the Australian Government’s commitment of \$7.3 million for the design of the Voice proposed at Uluru, and \$160 million for a referendum to achieve it. We seek to meet with the Prime Minister as soon as possible about how best to proceed. The way forward must be informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people throughout Australia.

We invite all Australians to walk with us on this journey, thoughtfully and with purpose, and to support our voice being heard.

Attachment: Uluru Statement from the Heart, 26 May 2017

This communiqué is issued on behalf of participants at an Uluru Dialogue workshop convened in Cairns and Yarrabah on 24-26 May 2019 by the Indigenous Law Centre UNSW and the NSW Aboriginal Land Council

NOTE TO MEDIA

Please direct any media enquiries regarding this Communiqué to Gemma McKinnon, Indigenous Law Centre (UNSW) on 0449 101 954.

Attributable Quotes from participants in the Uluru Dialogue workshop convened in Cairns and Yarrabah on 24-26 May 2019

Sammy 'Uluru' Wilson, Central Land Council (Chair)

"We asked the country to come and walk with us and we continue to say that. This is for all of us tjungu (together), we must be tjungu."

Nolan Hunter, Kimberley Land Council (CEO)

"This is one of the most powerful chapters in our Australian journey with its Indigenous peoples."

Kaylene Malthouse, North Queensland Land Council (Chair)

"The will of the people in '67 was to be united as one, and we now seek a similar endorsement, inclusive of all Australians, with the aspirations of the Uluru Statement to carry us forward."

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.