

Congress MOTION

Title: Voice, Treaty & Truth-Telling

Text:

Our Proud History

The Australian Trade Union movement has a long, very proud and strong history standing shoulder to shoulder with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in campaigning for social justice, civil and industrial rights in the pursuit of equality and self-determination.

A foundation stone in achieving equality, by and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, has been the journey to ensuring there are strong, self-determining, and representative structures of First Nations voices, a commitment to Treaty making and a process of Truth telling which will lead to true reconciliation.

The ACTU, Australian Unions and their members have been engaged in the ongoing national conversation for decades. Unions have worked with and walked beside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, through the 1967 Referendum, the '1Barunga Statement' in 1988, the dialogue initiated by the Expert Panel on Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People in the Constitution in 2010, to now in the current campaign.

For more than 50 years the trade union movement has supported the voices, and campaigning, calling for an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, Treaty & Truth-telling process.

¹ The 'Barunga Statement', presented to Prime Minister Bob Hawke in 1988 by Galarrwuy Yunupingu and Wenten Rubuntja, was a log of claims that included; self-determination and self-management, control and enjoyment of our ancestral lands, compensation, full civil, economic, social and cultural rights. In June 1988 the Hawke Labor Government responded by adopting as its official policy to support a treaty between the Australian government and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

<http://aiatsis.gov.au/collections/collections-online/digitised-collections/treaty/barunga-statement>
<https://www.barungafestival.com.au/1988-statement/>

²The Statement from the Heart

In May 2017, at the symbolic heart of our nation, 250 delegates convened at the Uluru Convention to discuss the progress of this long standing national conversation and bestowed on the nation and Parliamentary leaders the ‘Statement from the Heart’.

The Statement from the Heart conveyed a powerful message “In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.”

The delegates agreed on three (3) priorities – a voice to parliament, ³Makarrata Commission for treaty and truth-telling.

Delegates considered a roadmap in achieving these aspirations.

What does this mean?

‘Voice to Parliament – including in the constitution a new Indigenous body advising the Australian Parliament. It would force politicians to listen to Indigenous peoples before they make laws that affect them.

Treaty – a long standing demand of Indigenous peoples. A ‘Makarrata Commission’ would guide agreement making between them and governments.

Truth-Telling – the ‘Makarrata Commission’ would also make sure that the true history of colonization is finally told’.

Our Engagement & Consultation

Out of the Uluru Convention the ACTU, the ACTU Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Committee, the ACTU Elder’s Council and Unions are undertaking a process of engagement and consultation to seek the views of members regarding the Statement’s three (3) priorities.

² The ‘Statement from the Heart’ was original named the ‘Uluru Statement from the Heart’, Anangu Tribal Elders asked for the statement name to be changed and with respect to Anangu people’s we will refer to the statement as the ‘Statement from the Heart’.

<https://www.sbs.com.au/yourlanguage/aboriginal/en/article/2017/12/08/anangu-tribal-elders-ask-name-uluru-statement-heart-be-changed>

³ Makarrata is a word in the Yolngu language meaning a coming together after a struggle, facing the facts of wrongs and living again in peace, and the use of Makarrata is derived from The Milingimbi Makarrata Resolution which is an outcome of “Makarrata: Bringing the Past into the Future”, an historic event held at Milingimbi in Arnhem Land from August 12 to 14 2016. We acknowledge it is written in the spirit of makarrata, a ceremony that has, as its guiding principle, all aspects of Yolngu social justice. This concept was chosen by Yolngu as a pathway to begin an awakening process to reconcile differences and misunderstandings, working towards unity and harmony. <http://www.milingimbiart.com/history/makarrata-statement/>

Amongst union members, and more broadly, the conversation around the need for and the process of potential constitutional reform is ongoing and continues to be an integral part of the national discussion.

Overwhelmingly Union members and their communities have shown absolute support for: a strong national voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples that comes from communities and gives representation from the grass roots; a Makarrata Commission to guide Treaty making between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples and governments; and Truth- Telling as a necessary step towards reconciliation.

Action

Congress condemns the Turnbull Government for rejecting the ‘Statement from the Heart’ and their continued hypocrisy regarding First Nations People. While Turnbull’s public rhetoric is about working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, his and his government’s actions show contempt for their long standing aspirations and their ongoing fight for equality and self-determination.

Congress acknowledges our proud history and commits to continuing the journey to equality by standing shoulder to shoulder with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander union members and their communities.

The ACTU will continue to provide resources and work with affiliates in raising awareness to achieve the campaign goals in support of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The ACTU and Australian Unions will continue to work to identify, increase and empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander unionists and the broader community in a campaign to ensure a strong, self-determining, First Nations representative voice; a commitment to a Makarrata Commission for Treaty making and a necessary process of Truth telling which will lead to true reconciliation.

Mover: Thomas Mayor Union: CFMMEU

Seconder: Jo Wilmont Union: ASU

CARRIED.