

Supporting First Nations constitutional reform

St Mark's Anglican Church, Buderim has partnered with the local Aboriginal Buelah Community to advocate for First Nations constitutional reform. Parishioners signed a table cloth, printed with the Uluru Statement From the Heart text, in their support of First Nations constitutional reform, justice and self-determination.

St Mark's Reconciliation Group member and table cloth co-creator Margaret Norris said that the table cloth signing initiative was timed to "coincide with the launch of [1 Voice Uluru's week of action](#). Our cloth is a project of our Reconciliation Group to promote awareness of current Indigenous issues for members of our parish and we hope it will be a lasting sign of positive relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples," Ms Norris said. "We have been delighted to have the support of the local Buelah Community, including community coordinator Heather Johnston and artist Kim Spittles, who is a Wiradjuri woman and who has designed the border of the table cloth for us. Mothers Union members have also been invited to work on the embroidering."

The [Uluru Statement From The Heart](#) was the result of a constitutional convention, held at the foot of Uluru on the land of the Anangu people in May 2017, bringing together more than 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders. The Convention was convened by the bi-partisan appointed [Referendum Council](#) to discuss and agree upon an approach to constitutional reform to recognise First Nations peoples. The Uluru Statement states two overarching reform objectives, these being establishing "a First Nations Voice enshrined in the constitution", and a Makarrata Commission "to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history".

The Rev'd Moria Evers said that by supporting the Uluru Statement From The Heart, St Mark's Anglican Church upholds the [Reconciliation Action Plan](#) of the Diocese. "The table cloth signing is a grassroots initiative of the Parish that supports the Diocese Reconciliation Action Plan's aims of raising awareness of First Nations' self-determination and appreciating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories," Mother Moira said.

COMMUNITY ORGANISING

In community organising, groups come together around a particular issue and lobby government to implement changes. An example is the Qld Community Alliance, which has a number of churches, including Anglican and Uniting, as members.



“By supporting the Uluru Statement, the Parish of St Mark’s seeks to empower and give voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by recognising and acknowledging their ancient and sacred link to the land. The Parish of St Mark’s is pro-active in its engagement with and support of the local Kabi Kabi custodians of the land. We believe that this can only enrich our lives together and our mutual commitment to care of the land of which we are joint stewards.”

The table cloth signing initiative at St Mark’s was part of a broader ‘Sunday Afternoon Conversation’ event where The Rev’d Dr Jo Inkpin spoke about ‘Feisty Friends and Foremothers of Jesus’, which was arranged by Heather Johnston.

Reconciliation Action Plan Coordinator and Bwngcolman woman Chrissy Ellis said that St Mark’s approach is unique and she encourages other parishes to support the RAP and long-fought for initiatives, such as The Statement From The Heart, in active ways. “It is important for parishes to implement our RAP because God calls us to a ministry of reconciliation,” Ms Ellis said. “St Mark’s presents a unique truth-telling model as a church committed to reconciliation and justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



The Statement From The Heart represents a collective voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across our nation and the church has an active role to play in acknowledging our voices and supporting the Makarrata and constitutional reform. The Uluru Statement From The Heart has evolved after generations of our people campaigning and lobbying for formal recognition as First Nations people.”

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What is the value of symbolic actions like this table cloth signing?
- What are the opportunities and risks of parishes getting involved in community organising campaigns that become heavily politicised?

MORE INFORMATION

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