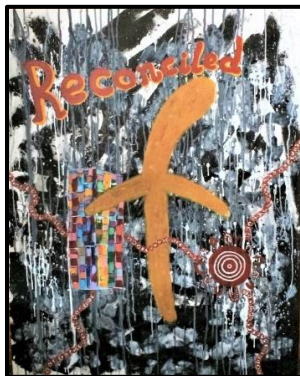


# SYNOD TASK FORCE

## INDIGENOUS MINISTRY IN THE DIOCESE OF SYDNEY

### REPORT TO THE 3<sup>rd</sup> SESSION OF THE 52<sup>ND</sup> SYNOD

September 2021



*Reconciled M Duckett 2018*

### Recommendation

1. Synod receive this report and –
  - (a) acknowledge and apologise for past failures in relationships with this nation's First Peoples,
  - (b) support and encourage every person, parish and Diocesan organisation to seek reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and commit to partner in Indigenous Ministry through development of an Action Plan which:
    - (i) is informed by the following diocesan documents:
      1. [A Theological Framework for Reconciliation, with Special Reference to The Indigenous Peoples of Australia](#) (Doctrine Commission Report, Diocese of Sydney, 2020)
      2. *Ministry to, and Reconciliation with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Diocese of Sydney* (Social Issues Committee Report, Diocese of Sydney)
    - (ii) notes the challenges provided in Dr Peter Adam's paper:
      3. *Australia – whose land? A call for recompense.* (The Rev Dr Peter Adam John Saunders Lecture 2009) [[www.ridley.edu.au/resource/australia-whose-land-christian-call-recompense/](http://www.ridley.edu.au/resource/australia-whose-land-christian-call-recompense/)]
    - (iii) encourages the development of personal relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with a view to *walk alongside* them, as well as partnering in prayer and partnering financially and in other practical ways with one or more Indigenous ministries,
  - (c) note and endorse the model for Indigenous ministry as envisaged by Pastor Michael Duckett and now established by the Sydney Anglican Indigenous People's Ministry Committee in the Macarthur Region at 19 Lysaght Rd Wedderburn, NSW,
  - (d) noting the importance of ongoing and appropriate capital support for Indigenous ministry in the Diocese in order to purchase further suitable properties in the future, requests the Standing Committee to –
    - (i) consider and prioritise the needs of the SAIPMC in the allocation of funds for purchase of properties for new ministry infrastructure, and

- (ii) report back to Synod in September 2023 with proposals to identify suitable property priorities to progress Indigenous ministry, along with the identified funding sources, for inclusion in the overall ministry infrastructure planning for the Diocese, and
- (e) request that a review of the action outcomes from this report be brought to the Synod in 2024.

## Background

2. At its session in 2018, the Synod passed the following resolution –

### **22/18 Indigenous Ministry in the Diocese**

'Synod commends to the prayers and interest of Synod members the parishes, Diocesan schools, organisations, committees and individuals involved in ministry with Indigenous people, and in particular the prioritisation to raise up the next generations of Indigenous Christian leadership.

Synod –

- (a) requests the Diocesan Doctrine Commission, in consultation with Indigenous Christian leaders nominated by the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee (SAIPMC), to bring a report to the next session of Synod on a theological framework for reconciliation, with special reference to the Indigenous peoples of Australia (providing progress reports to the task force established by the Synod in paragraph (b))
- (b) hereby establishes a task force consisting of three Indigenous Christians appointed by the SAIPMC, and Dean Kanishka Raffel, the Rev Stuart Crawshaw and the mover (Mr Tony Willis), with power to co-opt, and
- (c) requests the task force to work with the Social Issues Committee to report to the 1st ordinary session of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Synod detailing an appropriate out-working of the Bible's teaching on reconciliation, and providing recommendations as to how the Diocese as a whole, including organisations, parishes and individuals, might –
  - (i) acknowledge past failures in relationships with this nation's First Peoples, and
  - (ii) find ways to become more intentionally involved with the ministry of the gospel to and with Indigenous peoples.'

## Discussion

### Task Force Report and Recommendations

3. The Task Force has been asked to:
- (a) report to the Synod detailing an appropriate out-working of the Bible's teaching on reconciliation (in partnership with the Social Issues Committee),
  - (b) provide recommendations as to how the Diocese as a whole, including organisations, parishes and individuals, might –
    - (i) acknowledge past failures in relationships with this nation's First Peoples, and
    - (ii) find ways to become more intentionally involved with the ministry of the gospel to and with Indigenous peoples.

### Doctrine Commission Report on Reconciliation

4. This report was due to be presented to the October 2019 Sydney Diocesan Synod with the Task Force recommendations to follow at the October 2020 Sydney Diocesan Synod. The Doctrine Commission Report was not completed for the 2019 Synod and was presented to the March 2020 meeting of the Standing Committee where it was received by the Committee.

5. The [Doctrine Commission Report on Reconciliation](#) (the **Report**) was presented and received by the Synod at its first ordinary session of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Synod on 3 May 2021.
6. The Report overview presents for us a helpful summary:
  - (a) there is both asymmetry and analogy between divine-human reconciliation and person-to-person forgiveness, and
  - (b) divine-human reconciliation provides both the *shape* and *basis* of reconciliation in human relationships. We recognise that it is important to distinguish between human relationships that have been ruptured because of personal sin, and human relationships that have been disordered by past actions, attitudes and consequences that have caused estrangement in the present. Reconciliation is required in each case, but the steps towards reconciliation will differ.

### An Appropriate Outworking of the Bible's Teaching on Reconciliation

7. The Social Issues Committee Report: *Ministry to, and Reconciliation with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in the Diocese of Sydney* (Appendix 1), gives an historical background to the relationship between the Sydney Diocese and Indigenous people groups and a framework for exploring ways forward.
  - (a) Paragraph 2 has recommendations to the Task Force in presenting to the Synod
  - (b) Paragraphs 3-10 give a broader context. Note that Paragraph 3 presents that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are unique in Australian Society as the First Peoples; but ministry with and to First Nations Peoples sits in the broader context of Diocesan ministry. This summarises the problem in our approach to ministry with and to First Nations Peoples. Ministry with and to our First Nations Peoples should be unique and addressed specifically and separately to the "broader context" to reflect the particular responsibility we have in bringing about true reconciliation. As outlined in the Doctrine Commission Report this will include the acknowledgement of sin/wrong/hurt/pain that has been caused through colonisation.
  - (c) Paragraphs 11-28 give a brief historical perspective which shows that
    - (i) Indigenous people lived on the land, and
    - (ii) this land was taken from them for colonial purposes including use by and benefit to the Church.
  - (d) Paragraphs 29-30 reflect that, from all the Diocesan benefits gained from what was historically Indigenous property, we have committed to "return" 1% of income generated from the Diocesan Endowment for Indigenous ministry.
  - (e) Paragraphs 31-38 reflect more recent decisions and action, primarily over the past 20 years, notably
    - (i) 2002 - the formation of the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples Ministry Committee<sup>1</sup>
    - (ii) 2014 - the development of the Anglicare Reconciliation Action Plan
  - (f) Paragraphs 39-59 are possible actions for the broader Diocese and Parishes to take.

### Peter Adam Lecture

8. The paper from Peter Adam's 2009 John Saunders' Lecture ([www.ridley.edu.au/resource/australia-whose-land-christian-call-recompense/](http://www.ridley.edu.au/resource/australia-whose-land-christian-call-recompense/)) includes the following points:
  - (a) God in his sovereign purposes as creator, sustainer and owner of all things gifted the land of Australia to the Indigenous peoples who are the First Nations People of this land.
  - (b) Under the lie of *terra nullius* the First Nations People were dispossessed of the land through violence, aggression, murder and theft by European (British) invaders.
  - (c) Repentance is required.
  - (d) Apology is required.
  - (e) Recompense is required.
  - (f) We have all benefited from this dispossession, violence, aggression, murder and theft.

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<sup>1</sup> Under the SAIPMC Ordinance the Committee must be composed of a majority of Indigenous members and any motions passed must be by an Indigenous majority.

## Implications

9. All three papers provided to the Synod and referred to above make clear that action toward reconciliation with our Indigenous brothers and sisters is required. Disagree with aspects if you must, but the overwhelming conclusion is the need for reconciliation between Australia's First Nations People and all who have arrived in Australia since. We must acknowledge the wrong done, be reconciled and determine a way toward recompense.
10. For the Christian Church, Peter Adam states the following:

‘We could also implement voluntary recompense by churches in a coordinated way and should include support of indigenous Christian ministry and training, as negotiated by the leaders of Christ's indigenous people. Christian churches should lead the way in this, not least in supporting indigenous Christians and their ministries. For churches too have benefited from the land they use, and from income from those who have usurped the land.’

## Current Indigenous Ministries in the Diocese

11. There are currently five Indigenous church ministries in partnership with parishes across the Diocese as well as specific Indigenous ministries taking place through Diocesan schools and organisations.
12. The five Indigenous church ministries are:
  - Scarred Tree Indigenous Ministries in partnership with St John's Anglican Church Glebe
    - Led by Sharon and Ray Minniecon
  - Living Water Community Church in partnership with Evangelism and New Churches
    - The ministry leadership position is vacant
  - Macarthur Indigenous Church in partnership with St Peter's Anglican Church Campbelltown
    - Led by Michael Duckett
  - Mount Druitt Indigenous Church in partnership with Minchinbury Anglican Church and Mount Druitt Presbyterian Church
    - Led by Rick Manton
  - Shoalhaven Aboriginal Community Church in partnership with All Saint's Anglican Church Nowra
    - The ministry leadership position is vacant
13. The active partnership of these ministries with existing parishes and organisations is important in their development with the need for ongoing recruiting, training and equipping of our Indigenous leaders.
14. To continue to resource and grow these ministries increased funding is required through greater involvement and support from our parishes.
15. Such support must be given in a context where Indigenous leaders are entrusted to make their own decisions and utilise these resources as they see necessary and relevant to their ministry – i.e., “no strings attached”.

## A Model for Indigenous Ministry

16. In November 2019 the Sydney Anglican Indigenous People's Ministry Committee purchased a 2 hectare property at Wedderburn to enable the Macarthur Indigenous Church to have a dedicated space upon which to carry out ministry with their people. The property contains a house in which Pastor Michael Duckett and his family live, as well as a shed that has been renovated as a ministry centre, including toilets, kitchen and meeting area. Other sheds on the property have been modified through an active partnership with Soul Revival Anglican Church to enable cultural activities to take place.

17. The bushland setting provides a culturally appropriate setting for Indigenous ministry. This has resulted in “ownership” of the site by the Macarthur Indigenous Church resulting in growth that has previously been restricted by sharing sites with other “white” ministries.
18. The total cost for this project has been \$1.5 million, in an area where land is relatively cheaper than many other areas of the Diocese. It is the view of the task force that this model should be replicated in Mount Druitt and Nowra with modification of the model considered for ministries in the more densely populated areas of our city such as Redfern and Glebe.



Bushland Setting



Ministry Partnership



Ministry Training



Ministry Housing



Ministry Facilities

**Future Indigenous ministries should look to this model as they are developed.**

## Conclusion

19. The Indigenous church is continually dealing with the impact of historical loss of cultural and family connection and the impact of past traumas over many generations.
20. We should recognise that across the Sydney Diocese there is still an unspoken expectation to “wear our shoes and be civilised”:
  - (a) but Aboriginal Christians cannot function in a foreign culture of external expectation
  - (b) does the Aboriginal church have to be like the white church?
  - (c) Indigenous ministry builds from a unique culture in forming a Christian worldview
  - (d) but the white church continues to influence the Aboriginal church toward their way of thinking.

21. What is required is:

**TRUST / RESPECT / JUSTICE**

22. It is therefore recommended that the Synod of the Anglican Church Diocese of Sydney pass the motion outlined in paragraph 1 of this report.

*Task Force members (in consultation with the SAIPMC)*

Pastor Michael Duckett

Archbishop Kanishka Raffel (Chair)

Rev Stuart Crawshaw

Mr Tony Willis

2 July 2021

[Updated 27 June 2022]



## Synod Task Force on Indigenous Ministry in the Diocese of Sydney

### Ministry to, and Reconciliation with, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Diocese of Sydney Parishes

#### Purpose

1. This paper explains:
  - (a) the importance of taking active steps to pursue ministry among and with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
  - (b) means by which individual parishes may be involved in these activities, in an intentional and committed manner, chiefly through the creation of action plans.

#### Recommendations

2. This paper recommends to the Indigenous Ministry Task Force that a motion be put to Synod, via Standing Committee. This motion would:
  - (a) reiterate the importance of support for ministry to and reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and
  - (b) encourage parishes to establish an action plan (or something similar) to further this work at the local level, or advise the Diocese if one already exists.

#### Broader context for ministry

3. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are unique in Australian society, as the First Peoples to inhabit the country. Our approach to ministry with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must incorporate recognition of this history and the consequent need for some form of reconciliation.
4. However, as the Diocesan vision and mission indicate, we undertake this ministry and reconciliation within a larger aim, to reach all with the good news of the gospel. The Sydney Diocese's vision is: 'To see Christ honoured as Lord and Saviour in every community.' Our consequent mission, framed by *Mission 2020*, is to 'commit ourselves afresh, in prayerful dependence on the Holy Spirit, to glorify God and love our neighbour by proclaiming the Lord Jesus Christ, calling people to repent and living lives worthy of him.' (<https://sydneyanglicans.net/mission/>).
5. A number of priorities sit under this vision and mission, within *Mission 2020*. These priorities reflect intent to:
  - (a) spread the gospel to all (regardless of background or other factors), and
  - (b) strengthen and grow churches from the inside, through the increasing Christian maturity of their members.(Priorities accessible through <https://sydneyanglicans.net/mission/>).
6. Ministry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities sits within this broader context.
7. In Christ we have graciously been enabled to see the need for and then be given reconciliation with God. We are a community of people in relationship with God through Christ. We encourage others to seek that same reconciliation and relationship with God for themselves, and to join Christian fellowship, centred around Christ. This fundamental reconciliation has become for Christians a better basis and motivation for any sort of reconciliation that may be possible here on earth.

8. Our concern for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must be consistent with our concern for every other person that does not know God. We work to bring all people into relationship with God and fellowship with other Christians. This is, for Christians, the true basis for real, lasting reconciliation between people. We must therefore model this reconciliation, becoming representatives of the lasting, transcendent peace God brings when he is at the centre of our lives. All should be welcome in our churches, in our communities.
9. Within this broader context, however, we should be particularly attuned to the unique situation associated with ministry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, showing consideration and regard for human dignity. We wish to ameliorate, where possible, any factor that particularly impedes engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as well as acknowledging instances in which the Diocese's past actions albeit well-intentioned have been inconsiderate. We must be deliberate, sensitive, and transparent in our inclusivity, but ground it always, first, in the grace we have received. To do this, we must have an accurate and nuanced understanding of, and respect for, the diverse perspectives represented in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community.
10. Reconciliation Australia's resources have been consulted to assist the development and effective use of such an understanding. These resources are described later in this paper. However, as Reconciliation Australia<sup>1</sup> has different aims and goals, these resources must be read, and used, with the above broader context and the Synod's past action and present position (next two sections) in mind.

## Elements of the history between Anglican Diocese of Sydney with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

11. In the interests of approaching ministry with Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples from a better-informed position, the following historical information is provided.<sup>2</sup>

### Accounts of the presence of Aborigines in the Sydney area

12. The early accounts of explorers and settlers in Australia note the presence of Aboriginal people in the Sydney area. Governor Phillip describes the Aboriginal people in the area, including a number of their customs and evidence of their culture in handiwork and craft.<sup>3</sup> He finds evidence of the presence of Aboriginal people both on the coast and far inland, and he surmises that the number of them living in the Sydney area 'cannot be less than one thousand five hundred'.<sup>4</sup> Scholars now believe that the aboriginal population in the Sydney area at the time of the arrival of the First Fleet in 1788 was between 2,000 to 3,000 people.<sup>5</sup>
13. Rev. Richard Johnson makes reference to a description of Aboriginal people that Capt. Cook recorded in his journal. In letters that he sent back to England Johnson notes that his own description of Aboriginal people is in keeping with Cook's.<sup>6</sup> Johnson came upon a large group of Aboriginal people on a beach shortly after the arrival of the First Fleet records some words of their language, the meaning of the words spoken, as well as the nature of the encounter and instructions from Gov. Phillip regarding the interactions of settlers with Aboriginal people:

'I saw thirty of them fishing...They came out of the water, joined in a Body together and stood till we came up with them. As we came near them they spoke to us in a loud dissonant manner, principally uttering these words— "Warra, Warra, Wai", which we

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/>

<sup>2</sup> The information in this section was part of the material prepared by Dr Laurel Moffatt, Diocesan Research Officer, in February 2019 to explain the long-term background to the creation and financing of the Indigenous People's Ministry Trust Fund in 1997.

<sup>3</sup> 'In Botany Bay, Port Jackson, and Broken Bay we frequently saw the figures of men, shields, and fish roughly cut on the rocks; and on the top of a mountain I saw the figure of a man in the attitude they put themselves in when they are going to dance, which was much better done than I had seen before, and the figure of a large lizard was sufficiently well executed to satisfy every one what animal was meant.' 'Letter from Gov Phillip to Lord Sydney', 15 May 1788, *Historical Records of New South Wales*, vol 1, pt. 2, p. 135.

<sup>4</sup> 'Letter from Gov Phillip to Lord Sydney', 15 May 1788, *Historical Records of New South Wales*, vol 1, pt 2, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> Attenbrow, Val. *Sydney's Aboriginal Past: Investigating archaeological and historical records*, NSW, UNSW Press, 2002, p 17.

<sup>6</sup> Johnson, Rev. Richard. *Some Letters of Rev. Richard Johnson, B.A.*, collected and edited by George Mackaness. Part 1. Vol 20 *Australian Historical Monographs*. Sydney, DS Ford, 1954.



judged to be to tell us to go away. When we came up to them I tied some bits of cloth, etc. round their heads and necks and also gave one of them a comb, at which he seemed especially pleased and astonished. Some of them then began to dance, and one of them offered me one of his fishing giggs, which I refused, the Governor ordering that nothing should be taken from them.<sup>7</sup>

## Settlement of the Sydney area

14. In colonial law, colonies could be formed by settlement, cession, conquest or annexation.<sup>8</sup> Australia was colonised by settlement, which did not recognise the presence or rights of original inhabitants of the land. Additionally, 'settlement' was usually only a means of declaring sovereignty over a place, and was not a claim of title of the settled lands. However, Australia was an unusual exception to that rule and allowed for claim of title.<sup>9</sup>

## Letters of Instruction for Governor Phillip

15. In the Crown's instructions (particularly the additional instructions) to Governor Phillip in 1788, Gov. Phillip was instructed to find a spot 'in or near each town...[to] be set apart for the building of a church' and that 400 acres of land adjacent to the church be allotted for 'the maintenance of a minister, and 200 for a schoolmaster'.<sup>10</sup>

16. 400 acres of land were measured and allotted to Johnson for church land sometime in or after 1790. He makes reference to this in a letter to the Right Honourable Henry Dundas, and also describes the difficulty he had in clearing the land. Johnson records that in response to Johnson's requests for more help in clearing the land, the Lt Gov suggested that if he resign his claim to the 400 acres of church land, he 'would have a grant the same as others'.<sup>11</sup> A grant of 100 acres to Rev. Richard Johnson is recorded on 28 May 1793.<sup>12</sup>



## The Church and School Lands Corporation

17. In 1826 the Clergy and School Lands Corporation was formed by Royal Charter in order to 'make provision for the maintenance of religion in the colony and the education of the youth' in the colony of New South Wales.<sup>13</sup> The corporation was allowed to appropriate, lease and mortgage land.
18. In 1828, roughly 350 acres of what was by then known as the St Philip's glebe land were subdivided into 27 allotments and offered for lease with the permission to purchase.

<sup>7</sup> Johnson, Rev. Richard. Letter to Henry Fricker, London, Feb 10, 1788. *Some Letters of Rev. Richard Johnson, B.A.*, collected and edited by George Mackaness. Part 1. Vol 20 *Australian Historical Monographs*. Sydney, DS Ford, 1954.

<sup>8</sup> Roberts-Wray, Sir Kenneth. *Commonwealth and Colonial Law*, 1966, pgs 98-112.

<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> 'Phillip's Additional Instructions,' *Historical Records of New South Wales*, vol 1, pt 2, p. 259. <https://archive.org/stream/historicalrecord1pt2sidnuoft?ref=ol#page/258/mode/2up>

<sup>11</sup> 'Rev. Richard Johnson to the Right Honourable Henry Dundas,' April 8, 1794.

<sup>12</sup> The religion was that of the Church of England and Ireland and no other. Royal charter constituting the Trustees of the Clergy and School Lands in the Colony of New South Wales / George the Fourth.

<sup>13</sup> The religion was that of the Church of England and Ireland and no other. Royal charter constituting the Trustees of the Clergy and School Lands in the Colony of New South Wales / George the Fourth.

19. The majority of the lots were sold at that time, but two were retained as the St Phillip's Glebe, and one lot reserved for the Archdeacon.<sup>14</sup>
20. The Clergy and School Lands Corporation was dissolved by William IV by an order of Council on 4 February 1833. Upon the dissolution of the Corporation all the land, mortgages, debts and anything belonging to that corporation became vested in the Crown.<sup>15</sup>

### Diocese of Australia and Diocese of Sydney

21. The Diocese of Australia was formed by Letters Patent on 18 January 1836.<sup>16</sup> Shortly after the creation of the Diocese of Australia from the Diocese of Calcutta, the Crown passed a law concerning the affairs of the church and diocesan land. It authorised the trustees of any glebe lands in New South Wales to 'enter into and upon the said glebe land, and to let the same upon leases for any term not exceeding 28 years, reserving the rent, issues, and profits thereof, to the said trustees for the time being, who shall and may receive and apply the said rents, issues, and profits upon trust in the first place to pay...the minister of the said church,' and after that the money could be used for the 'building or enlarging the church' of the parish connected to the glebe lands, and after that for the building or enlarging any other church 'in the same township or district', and the payment of a stipend for the minister for that church.<sup>17</sup>
22. On 13 September 1842, a land grant of over 32 acres was given to William Grant Broughton on the behalf of St Philip's church, 'being a portion of the land granted to the Trustees of the late Church and School Corporation by Deed dated 24th day of November 1829, but which reverted to the Crown on the dissolution of that Body by order of the King in Council of 4 February 1833.'<sup>18</sup> On 9 July 1846, land adjoining the St Philip's Glebe was also granted to the church by the Crown.<sup>19</sup> Shortly after the grant of the land to St Philip's church, the Diocese of Sydney was formed by Letters Patent on 25 June 1847. Upon the creation of the Diocese of Sydney in 1847, the church lands within the limits of the Diocese of Sydney became the property of the Diocese of Sydney.<sup>20</sup>

### Diocesan Property

23. The St. Philip's Glebe was subdivided in 1842 into 32 allotments and leased for 28 years.<sup>21</sup> The Bishopthorpe Estate was subdivided into 238 allotments and leased for 99 years from 1856.<sup>22</sup> The rents and profits from the leased glebe land were managed by trustees for the glebe lands.<sup>23</sup> The Church of England Property Trust Diocese of Sydney was formed in 1917 by the *Anglican Church of Australia Trust Property Act 1917*.
24. The trustees of the St Philip's Glebe were gathered into a Board of Trustees in 1920.<sup>24</sup> In 1930, the Glebe Administration Board was created and the Board was given the power of 'managing and controlling' the St Philip's glebe, including the collection of rents, the subdivision of land, and the lease of land.

<sup>14</sup> *Glebe Conservation Area Study Report*. Feb 2008. p. 4.

<sup>15</sup> William IV, No. 11. *An Act for regulating the affairs of the late corporation of the trustees of the Clergy and School Lands and to secure to the purchasers their titles to certain lands purchased by them, from the said corporation* [5 August, 1834].

<sup>16</sup> Appendix D, 'Letters Patent relating to Australia and the Cape,' Report of the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, for the year 1947. London, 1947, p. cxxxvi.

<sup>17</sup> 8 William IV, No 5. *An Act to regulate the temporal affairs of churches and chapels of the United Church of England and Ireland, in New South Wales*. 6 September, 1837.

<sup>18</sup> State Records Authority of New South Wales; Kingswood, NSW, Australia; Archive Reel: 1732; Series: 1216; Description: Copies of Deeds of Grant to Land Alienated by Grant, Lease or Purchase Volume 78 Grants, United Church of England, Ireland No:4 1842-1849.

<sup>19</sup> This grant is referred to in many ordinances of the Sydney Diocese pertaining to the property of the Bishopthorpe Estate. There were many grants of land given to the Diocese of Australia during this time. The grants that pertain to the present-day suburb of Glebe in the diocese of Sydney are just one example.

<sup>20</sup> *Dioceses of Sydney and Newcastle Lands Investment Act 1858: An Act to remove doubts respecting the vesting of certain Lands situated within the Dioceses of Sydney and Newcastle respectively which were formerly vested in the Bishop of Australia*. 27th August 1858.

<sup>21</sup> *Glebe Conservation Area Study*, p. 5.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>23</sup> *61/1890 An Ordinance for the making provision for parochial government and the management of Church property in Parishes and for other matters*. 6 May 1891.

<sup>24</sup> *St Philip's Glebe Land Vesting Management Ordinance 1920*.

25. During the first half of the 20th century the Sydney diocese passed ordinances allowing for the mortgage of St Philip's glebe land, and the use of income for that glebe for different purposes in the diocese, such as repairs to Bishopscourt, the payment of stipends of senior clergy, and the managing of debts.<sup>25</sup>
26. As the leases of the glebe land ended around the middle of the 20th century, the Sydney Synod passed ordinances allowing the sale of the St Philip's Glebe and the Bishopthorpe Estate lands.<sup>26</sup> In 1974, the St Philip's Glebe and Bishopthorpe Estate were sold. 'About 125 properties in the Bishopthorpe Estate and the St Philip's Glebe were sold individually for a sum of \$3 million before about 700 properties were sold to the Australian Government for \$17.5 million.'<sup>27</sup>

### Proceeds from the sale of Diocesan Property

27. The majority of the proceeds from the sales of the glebe property were managed by the Glebe Administration Board. Of the \$17.5m from the sale of the glebe lands to the Federal Government, \$7.5m of it related to the Bishopthorpe Estate and therefore the Endowment of the See. Decisions about the reinvestment of that portion of the sale price were to be decided by the Archbishop and the Standing Committee. \$10m of the \$17m was then managed by the Glebe Administration Board in consultation with the Standing Committee.<sup>28</sup> According to a report to Standing Committee regarding the activities of the Glebe Administration Board, as found in the *Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney* 1976, the Board reinvested in property.
28. In 1984 the *Glebe Administration Ordinance 1930-1981* was amended and omitted the preamble that described the grants of land made to the Diocese. This ordinance also defined the property held on trust by the Board and allowed for the investment of any money received by the Board in a variety of ways, including the purchase of shares, stocks and securities that are listed on the Stock Exchange. The *Diocesan Endowment Ordinance 1984* re-declared the trusts of the Glebe Administration Board and gave Synod the authority to determine how money from the Board should be allocated, and the Standing committee to use the money as directed by Synod (clause 4).

### Use of Diocesan funds for Aboriginal Ministry

29. In 1997, Synod established an Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee and an Indigenous People's Ministry Trust Fund and appropriated \$1.2m of the Provision for Distribution of the Glebe Administration Board held on trust under the *Diocesan Endowment Ordinance 1984*. The \$1.2m was then vested with the Anglican Church Property Trust Diocese of Sydney on trust for an Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Trust Fund.
30. From 2006, the Indigenous Trust Fund has received 1% of the distribution to Synod from the income of the Diocesan Endowment.<sup>29</sup> All funds managed by the Property Trust incur a fee. Until 2019, the fee was 1.1%. [*Since August 2019, funds held by the ACPT for the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee have been exempt from the application of the ACPT's management fee.*] Further information about Synod decisions related to the Committee and Fund are available in Attachment 1.

### Recent Synod activity toward reconciliation and ministry

31. In addition to the Committee and Fund discussed above, ministry to, and amongst, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, alongside recognition of past injustice, has been of interest in the Synod for the last twenty years. Elements of this interest are listed at Attachment 1 and summarised below.

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<sup>25</sup> For example: *The Bishop Coadjutor Stipend Ordinance of 1925*, and *Diocesan Revenues—St Philip's Glebe (Further Mortgage)—Bishopthorpe Ordinance 1949*. *Saint Philip's (Sydney) Church and School Resumption Ordinance 1934*.

<sup>26</sup> *St Philip's Glebe Sale Ordinance 1958*, and *St Philip's Glebe Sale Ordinance 1972*.

<sup>27</sup> Report to Standing Committee: 'Report of the Glebe Administration Board', *Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney*, 1976. 20.5 million dollars in 1974 was worth just over \$167.7 million in 2018, according to the Reserve Bank of Australia's inflation calculator.

<sup>28</sup> 'Report to Standing Committee: Glebe Administration Board,' *Year Book of the Diocese of Sydney*, 1975.

<sup>29</sup> *Synod Appropriations and Allocations Ordinance 2006*.

32. In 1999, churches were encouraged to be involved in the consultative process for the then Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation's draft *Document for Reconciliation*.
33. In 2013, Synod passed a resolution thanking God for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christians and churches, and the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee's support of them. Sydney Anglicans were encouraged to pray for, partner with, and financially support these ministries.
34. A year later, in 2014, Anglicare was acknowledged for establishing a Reconciliation Action Plan (a RAP). The benefits in relation to 'direct service delivery, increased cultural awareness amongst staff, and the provision of employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people' were noted, and the Diocese encouraged parishes and Diocesan-associated organisations to establish their own plans (21/14 Reconciliation Action Plans (*Synod Circular 2014*, p. 11)).
35. Anglicare's reasons for developing a RAP are captured in the Chief Executive Officer's introductory comments to Anglicare's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2017-2020:

'The Christian gospel and its message of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ is at the heart of Anglicare Sydney ("Anglicare") and what it is we seek to do for people in God's grace. An important expression of the ministry of reconciliation we have been entrusted with is to seek practical ways to bring about real and lasting change in the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians recognise the injustices of the past and together chart a new way forward characterised by justice, dignity, opportunity and hope for all Australians.'

36. Further, in the 'Our Business' section of the plan:

'As a Christian organisation with a heritage of service spanning more than 160 years we seek to serve the community, enrich lives and demonstrate the love of Jesus. We believe God calls us to care for and love one another, just as he cares for and loves us. It is this love, shown to us in the life and death of Jesus Christ, that motivates us to meet the physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs of others. We exist to serve the vulnerable, poor, and socially excluded with respect, compassion, and love. We acknowledge that each person is created by God, and disregard racial, cultural, socio-economic, and man-made barriers that divide us from each other. Our faith in Jesus Christ compels us to act with compassion, help the vulnerable, and be a voice for the disadvantage.'

(Extracts from *Anglicare's Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) 2017-2020*, <https://www.anglicare.org.au/about-us/our-reconciliation-action-plan/>).

37. Church parishes are different in nature, composition, and purpose to Anglicare but the principle remains: that the Anglican Church's and the individual Christian's mission is to spread and model the message of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ to everyone. Within this context, the unique position of Australia's First Peoples should be acknowledged. As Attachment 2, a Reconciliation Australia-provided guide to 'inclusive and respectful language' demonstrates, this is not solely about acknowledging past injustice but devising engagement strategies that recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' strength and promote 'mutually respectful and genuine two-way relationships of shared significance.'
38. Last year (2018), the Synod reinforced its previous messages by requesting 'a report for Synod in 2020 detailing an appropriate outworking of the Bible's teaching on reconciliation, and providing recommendations as to how the Diocese (organisations, parishes and individuals) might acknowledge past failures in relationships with this nation's First Peoples, and find ways to become more intentionally involved with the ministry of the gospel to and with Indigenous peoples. (*See resolution 22/18*).'  
(Summary of 22/18 Indigenous Ministry in the Diocese (*Synod Circular 2018*, p. 2)).

## **Involving Individual Parishes in Reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples**

39. As previously noted, Anglicare is well-advanced in its consideration of these issues, with a RAP in place since 2014. A RAP is the equivalent of a specialised business plan, put in place by an organisation to further constructive engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff and the broader community.
40. The RAP framework is overseen by Reconciliation Australia, whose website ([reconciliation.org.au](http://reconciliation.org.au)) advises that over 1,000 organisations have 'formally committed to reconciliation' though it. Reconciliation Australia offers an endorsement process, which allows an organisation to use the RAP logo, indicating compliance with the framework and standards.
41. The aim of the framework is to turn 'good intentions into positive actions, helping to build higher trust, lower prejudice, and increased pride in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures' by developing a 'community of shared values, goals and a common language when it comes to reconciliation.' The overall goal is to create the 'right environment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to access sustainable employment and business opportunities, and contributing to a just, equitable and reconciled Australia.' Further information about Reconciliation Australia and RAPs may be found at [reconciliation.org.au](http://reconciliation.org.au).
42. The difficulties associated with asking all organisations within the Diocese to investigate and form such plans are recognised. This would be an ambitious first step to more organised, systematic commitment and action. Therefore, the committee recommends the process begins with parishes.
43. As its overall goal indicates, the RAP, in its formal form, was created by Reconciliation Australia for autonomous workplaces, organisations with employees. However, Reconciliation Australia has partnered with World Vision to create a similar resource for individual church use - the Church Action Plan (*Walk Alongside* - Church Toolkit for Reconciliation (1st Edition)).

## **Action Planning at Parish Church Level**

44. The ideal and/or actual nature of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' reconciliation remains a contested subject. Further, churches should be encouraged to maintain reconciliation of the individual to God at the forefront of their efforts, given this is key to meaningful reconciliation here on earth.
45. Some parishes are unlikely to see an immediate connection to their parishioners or wider communities, and therefore consider other ministries of more immediate priority. So, the Diocese's explanation of, and visible support for, this project will be vital.
46. All parishes should be encouraged to be involved, against the background of Synod's evident belief in its importance and agreed Biblical injunctions to show God's love to others. The first step may be the relatively small one of creating basic plans that each church can continue to build on over time.
47. Parishes with statistically small numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can be involved by establishing links with, and providing support to, those parishes that have larger proportions, as well as with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples-focused ministries, or through partnering with organisations such as Anglicare or Anglican Aid. Parishes are encouraged to think broadly, beyond these suggestions, to other communication, engagement, and partnering arrangements, with the goal of aiding understanding, ministry and reconciliation. This is in keeping with the Synod's stated positions and goals for the Diocese, that all members be involved. In addition, the need to care for all in our community who may experience a sense of injustice, for whatever reason, will be highlighted and reinforced within parishes.

## Creating Parish Action Plans

48. The Reconciliation Australia/World Vision guide and template for parish church action plans are at [www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/Church/walk-alongside-church-toolkit---1st-edition.pdf](http://www.worldvision.com.au/docs/default-source/Church/walk-alongside-church-toolkit---1st-edition.pdf). As the following account of their aims and contents indicates, the primary goal of these action plans, as they were conceived, was 'positive and lasting social change' (p. 6), improvement of the social, economic, and political position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia. Whilst agreeing with these aims in principle, our focus falls, first, on individual reconciliation with God.

### Why should churches get involved?

49. Reconciliation Australia and World Vision contend that: 'By acknowledging and creating greater understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and histories; building stronger and more respectful relationships between non- Indigenous and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples; and helping to close the gaps in life circumstances and expectancy, churches can contribute to positive and lasting social change within Australia.' (p. 6).
50. The *Walk Alongside Program* nominates the following Bible passages as supportive of its 'formula for reconciliation' (relationships, respect, opportunities) (p. 10). It proposes that:
- 2 Corinthians 5:18-9 supports 'the centrality of reconciliation to the message of the gospel and the life of your church.'
  - Galatians 3:26-8 supports 'creating the right environment for a deeper encounter with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in churches and across our communities.'
  - Ephesians 2:13-4 supports 'extending the ministry of the church to establishing and deepening the church's links with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.'

See the 'Broader context for ministry' part of this paper. We would caution against using Bible passages intended to encourage evangelisation, or to mature and enrich relationships amongst Christians, to refer to reconciliation between Christians and non-Christians. We wish to spread the good news of the gospel to all peoples. It is rather the **approach** to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that requires careful and sensitive consideration, given the unique history involved.

### How does the Walk Alongside Program help?

51. The Walk Alongside Program:
- 'provides a framework and suggested activity plan to help Christian churches build stronger and healthier relationships with Indigenous Australians.'
  - 'seeks to point to a whole range of faith based and non-faith based resources, potential partners and networks that can support a church on this reconciliation journey.'
  - 'embeds Reconciliation Australia's model for reconciliation - Relationships, Respect and Opportunities, within a faith context, focusing on elements of church life both within the church and in the broader community.' (p. 6).

### What are the desired outcomes?

52. The desired outcomes of the program are that churches will:
- 'demonstrate greater cultural sensitivity and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.'
  - 'create new pathways and opportunities for the building of stronger relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.'
  - 'be better positioned to participate in advocacy initiatives alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.' (p. 8).



## 'Getting Started' (p. 9 of the guide)

Step	Description	Notes
<b>1. 'Take stock'</b>	Evaluate the parish's (congregation and leadership) position in relation to reconciliation.	
<b>2. 'Be inspired'</b>	Watch a DVD about 'the shared story of Indigenous and non- Indigenous Australians.'	Link to DVD provided.
<b>3. 'Yarn'</b>	The leadership or a working group meet and talk about: a) the church's current level of understanding about, and engagement with, reconciliation, and b) ideas for 'ways to deepen relationships with and contribute to closing the gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.'	<b>The remaining steps (3 to 7)</b> might need to be taken more than once. The resource encourages this if required, because it allows for 'deepening' of 'relationships'.
<b>4. 'Commit'</b>	Decide on the wording of a 'formal commitment to reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.'	The resource indicates that this statement should be shared with the 'congregation and community'. However, ideally, it would be developed in consultation with them, especially the congregation, as they will be taking responsibility for its outworking.
<b>5. 'Act'</b>	The church is encouraged to 'turn your faith and commitment into action' by solidifying the discussed intentions into a practical plan.	The resource provides a: a) 'Framework for Church Engagement' (pp. 11-5); and b) plan template (pp. 16-8).
<b>6. 'Celebrate'</b>	The resource recommends that churches hold a 'week of prayer for reconciliation' and 'spread the word' about the outcomes of the plan with its community.	See p. 31 of the resource for discussion of the 'week of prayer...' idea.
<b>7. 'Reflect'</b>	'on your commitment and all that you have achieved.'	'take stock and evaluate where you, your church leadership and your congregation are on their reconciliation journey.'

## Resources provided to enact Step 5 - 'Act'

53. The 'Framework for Church Engagement' (pp. 11-5) explains, in general and then specific terms, how a church can work on the key concepts of 'Relationships', 'Respect', and 'Opportunities', both within the church itself and within its community. The process starts with understanding the culture and values of one's own church, before learning about and appreciating Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' histories and cultures, and, finally, actively making connections, supporting, and partnering with them, and ministries that work alongside them. Tangible actions (and accessible resources) are suggested for each stage. These will illicit discussion and, potentially, disagreement at church level, for example suggested support for specific political actions such as changes to the Australian Constitution.

54. The 'Walk Alongside Church Action Plan' template is also grouped according to 'Relationships', 'Respect', and 'Opportunities' (pp. 16-7). A number of outcomes can be attached to each of these concepts. Unlike RAPs, there is no specific requirement to register church plans with Reconciliation Australia or report back to Reconciliation Australia on progress against these plans, although periodic reassessment by the parish is recommended, and can be shared with World Vision (if the church partners with World Vision - see p. 15).
55. It is suggested, instead, that Diocese of Sydney parish *Walk Alongside* plans (and other similar initiatives) be registered and held with the Diocesan Registrar, not for continual central follow up but so the Diocese has an ongoing picture of efforts being made toward Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ministry at the local level, in the form of these plans but also other projects.
56. pp. 21-47 of the pack contain additional resources, such as an executive summary for the church minister, information about World Vision, relevant church group activities and workshop ideas, information about National Reconciliation Week as a potential Week of Prayer for Reconciliation, information about the National Prayer Book, and, finally, a list of helpful websites.

## Conclusion

57. The *Walk Alongside Program* resource is a well-considered, sensitively constructed, and easy-to-use package that, it is hoped, will help churches develop their own plans and projects to connect with and include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in their communities, as well as encourage churches to support similarly focused efforts elsewhere.
58. However, communication with parishes about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ministry should be embedded within the gospel message, that reconciliation of the individual to God is our primary focus. Relationships on earth are fleeting and marked by sin. The best way we can show love to our neighbours, all of them, regardless of background, is to point them to Christ. This should be our intent, as we consider specific actions that might improve ministry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.
59. Taking the above, as well as Synod's stated interest in progressing better understanding and connections, into consideration, churches may be asked to nominate a member with a particular interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' ministry to take responsibility for guiding the process of filling in the action plan template for their church, in consultation with a working group or the congregation as a whole. This would allow parishioners to have a say in their plans contents and adapt its suggestions to local conditions. If a volunteer is not forthcoming or other ministry priorities in a parish are considered more pressing, the senior pastor of the church could keep carriage of the issue until one of these circumstances changes.

This paper was authored by Ms Heather Christie and Dr Laurel Moffatt, Diocesan Researchers, under the direction of the Social Issues Committee.

## Social Issues Committee

22 July 2019

## Relevant Resolutions and Synod-related actions 1999 onwards

Resolution	Description
10/99 Document for Reconciliation ( <i>Resolutions Passed 1999</i> ).	'Synod, noting that the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has issued a draft 'Document for Reconciliation' comprising a declaration and four strategies, encourages parishes to -  (a) obtain a reconciliation pack from the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation, Locked Bag 14, Kingston ACT, 2604, telephone 02 6271 5120, fax 02 6271 5168, toll free 1800 807 071;  (b) study the proposed draft;  (c) participate in the consultative process; and  (d) make submissions to the Council by 5 November 1999 if possible, or at latest by 6 December the extended deadline that the Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation has agreed for Anglican churches.'
<i>Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Ordinance 2002</i> , pp. 3-4.	Describes the creation of the Sydney Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee and Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Trust Fund in the late 1990s. These initiatives were designed to support the planting, funding, and staffing of 'indigenous churches and associated ministries', but also to raise 'education and awareness' about 'Indigenous Issues' in the Diocese.
25/02 Funding for indigenous peoples' ministry ( <i>Resolutions Passed 2002</i> ).	'Synod recommends to the Standing Committee that priority be given under the Mission Strategy to resourcing Indigenous peoples' ministry by directing that a percentage of the proceeds from all sales of church trust property per annum be added to the Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Trust Fund for Indigenous ministry within the Diocese or by allocating continuing funding through the Synod Appropriations and Allocations Ordinance. Synod further urges each parish of the Diocese to generously support Indigenous ministry in the Diocese any way it can, for example, by giving a percentage of any land sales to the Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Trust Fund or by giving 1% of their net income to the fund or supporting existing Indigenous ministries at a local level in every possible way.'
25/02 <i>Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Funding (A report of the Standing Committee)</i> No. 4 in 'Other Reports Received by the Synod 2004'.	The Standing Committee recommended that 1% of 'the total available income...be appropriated in each year from 2006 onwards...' to be 'applied as a capital addition to the Fund, before any other allocations are determined across mission policy areas.' Justice was among the issues considered in making this recommendation, as the report explains: 'the principle behind taking a percentage of the Synod's income is the link between income derived from land endowed to the Diocese, and the moral issues concerning the past injustice towards indigenous people and land that was taken from them...'
26/13 Thanksgiving for Indigenous churches and fellowships ( <i>Synod Proceedings 2013</i> , p. 36).	'Synod –  (a) thanks God for those who first brought the gospel to this land and proclaimed it to our first peoples,  (b) thanks God for the thousands of Indigenous believers who in past days have faithfully run the race set before them,  (c) thanks God for the leadership and members of the Indigenous churches and fellowships presently meeting in the Diocese at Glebe, Mt Druitt, Campbelltown and Nowra, and for plans to commence a work located in Redfern,  (d) thanks God for efforts of the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee is making to grow these and other ministries,  (e) calls on parishes and members to join in prayer for the continuing growth of the gospel among the Indigenous communities in the Diocese, and

Resolution	Description
	(f) urges parishes to consider prayer, financial and other forms of partnership with our Indigenous churches and fellowships beyond the present funding and other support provided under the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Ordinance.'
21/14 Reconciliation Action Plans ( <i>Synod Circular</i> 2014, p. 11).	'That Synod – (a) notes the launch of Anglicare Sydney's inaugural Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) in May 2014 as a significant indication of the organisation's commitment to the development of deeper understanding and closer relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, (b) welcomes progress made to date as a result of Anglicare's Reconciliation Action Plan through direct service delivery, increased cultural awareness amongst staff and the provision of employment opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and (c) encourages individual parishes as well as diocesan organisations and schools to develop their own Reconciliation Action Plans aimed at enhancing relationships, respect and opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Sydney Diocese.'
22/18 Indigenous Ministry in the Diocese ( <i>Synod Proceedings</i> 2018, p. 55).	'Synod commends to the prayers and interest of Synod members the parishes, Diocesan schools, organisations, committees and individuals involved in ministry with Indigenous people, and in particular the particular the prioritisation to raise up the next generations of Indigenous Christian leadership.  Synod – (a) requests the Diocesan Doctrine Commission, in consultation with Indigenous Christian leaders nominated by the Sydney Anglican Indigenous Peoples' Ministry Committee (SAIPMC), to bring a report to the next session of Synod on a theological framework for reconciliation, with special reference to the Indigenous peoples of Australia (providing progress reports to the task force established by the Synod in paragraph (b)), (b) hereby establishes a task force consisting of three Indigenous Christians appointed by the SAIPMC, and Dean Kanishka Raffel, the Rev Stuart Crawshaw and the mover (Mr Tony Wills), with power to co-opt, and (c) requests the task force to work with the Social Issues Committee to report to the 1st ordinary session of the 52nd Synod detailing an appropriate out-working of the Bible's teaching on reconciliation, and providing recommendations as to how the Diocese as a whole, including organisations, parishes and individuals, might - (i) acknowledge past failures in relationships with this nation's First Peoples, and (ii) find ways to become more intentionally involved with the ministry of the gospel to and with Indigenous peoples.'

## Guide to terminology from the Reconciliation Australia Website

### 'RAP Good Practice Guide - Demonstrating inclusive and respectful language

Using respectful and inclusive language and terminology is an essential component of reconciliation. The ways we speak about reconciliation is just as important as the ways we act: language is itself active, and can impact on attitudes, understandings and relationships in a very real and active sense.

While they are guidelines only, below are some recommendations for using respectful and inclusive language and terminology throughout your RAP and other communications.

#### Seek guidance

Given the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities across Australia, you should always seek advice from your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders regarding preferences and protocols around terminology.

Please consider these guidelines, alongside guidance from your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders.

### Referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

#### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples

Using 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' is most often considered best practice.

- 'Aboriginal' (and less commonly accepted variants such as 'Aboriginals' or 'Aborigines') alone is also not inclusive of the diversity of cultures and identities across Australia, for which reason it should be accompanied by 'peoples' in the plural.
- Similarly, as a stand-alone term, 'Aboriginal' is not inclusive of Torres Strait Islander peoples, and reference to both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples should be spelt out where necessary.
- The acronym ATSI should be avoided as this can be seen as lacking respect of different identities.

#### First Nations and First Peoples

Other pluralised terms such as 'First Nations' or 'First Peoples' are also acceptable language, and respectfully encompass the diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and identities.

#### Acknowledging diversity

Pluralisation should extend to generalised reference to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander 'histories,' 'perspectives,' 'ways of being,' 'contributions,' and so forth. This acknowledges that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not homogenous.

#### Indigenous

In some parts of the country, the term 'Indigenous' can be considered offensive. That is, it has scientific connotations that have been used historically to describe Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as part of the 'flora/fauna' rather than the human population of Australia. It can be seen as a problematically universalising or homogenising label for what are, in reality, highly diverse identities.

An exception for the term 'Indigenous' is considered in some situations, for example:

- If an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person or organisation prefers and/or has approved the word 'Indigenous' to be used;
- If an organisation has appropriately referred to a program or job title (e.g. "Indigenous Programs Unit" or "Indigenous Programs Manager");
- If the word 'Indigenous' has been appropriately embedded into an organisational policy e.g. Federal or State Governments, United Nations
- If referring to non-Indigenous (non-Aboriginal or non-Torres Strait Islander) Australians. Terms such as 'other Australians' or 'the wider community' may also be acceptable in this regard.

### **Unacceptable terms**

Assimilationist terms such as 'full-blood,' 'half-caste' and 'quarter-caste' are extremely offensive and should never be used when referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

### **Terms to avoid**

Ensure that the following terms are avoided when describing/referring to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as they can perpetuate negative stereotypes:

- disadvantaged
- Aborigines
- native/native Australians
- lost (e.g. Lost language, cultures).

### **Showing respect**

#### **Capitalisation**

As capitalisation demonstrates respect, 'Aboriginal' and 'Torres Strait Islander' should always be capitalised. Capitalisation conventions are often also considered appropriate to extend to terms such as:

- First Peoples/Nations/Australians;
- Indigenous (if it is used at all);
- Elders;
- Traditional Owners/Custodians;
- Country (and corresponding terms such as 'Land,' when it is used in place of 'Country'), as well as the names of particular Language Groups or geo-cultural communities;
- Acknowledgement of Country, Welcome to Country, and the names of other cultural practices (particularly if the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander meanings or perspectives behind the words used to describe the practices – such as 'acknowledge' or 'welcome' – may be distinct to their English definitions or connotations).

NB: It is not necessary to capitalise the term 'reconciliation,' unless making reference to the name of Reconciliation Australia, or the name of a formal program or document such as your Reconciliation Action Plan.

#### **Avoiding deficit language**

Acknowledging and addressing the historical – and often intergenerational – injustices and inequities experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples since colonisation is a critical component of reconciliation.

Nevertheless, it is simultaneously imperative to acknowledge the strengths and resilience shown by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, cultures and communities in the face of discrimination, and to celebrate the continued significance of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contributions in shaping a shared sense of national unity and identity.



It is important to draw on empowering, strengths-based language, and to be careful not to perpetuate patronising or paternalistic rhetoric.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures have survived across the Australian continent for tens of thousands of years and, as such, are not 'in need' of being 'rescued' or 'saved.'

For example, there's a difference between a more deficit approach such as "helping disadvantaged Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students," and a more strengths-based alternative such as "providing meaningful opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to achieve at their full potential."

### **Avoiding language that divides**

Reconciliation is about working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their strengths, not doing things for them or to them.

Reconciliation processes and aspirations should not be described through dichotomous 'us' and 'them' language, but instead concentrate on promoting mutually respectful and genuine two-way relationships of shared significance.

## **Closing the gap**

### **Use of the term 'Closing the Gap'**

The term 'Closing the Gap', is used frequently without much consideration. It is important to make the distinctions between the terms 'closing the gap' and the 'Close the Gap' campaign.

**Closing the Gap:** is a government strategy that aims to reduce disadvantage among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement, and employment outcomes.

**Close the Gap:** Australia's peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous health bodies, health professional bodies and human rights organisations operate the Close the Gap Campaign. The Campaign's goal is to raise the health and life expectancy of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to that of the non-Indigenous population within a generation: to close the gap by 2030. It aims to do this through the implementation of a human rights-based approach set out in the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner's [Social Justice Report 2005](#).

Organisations that make reference this term, should briefly explain what role their organisation plays in Closing the Gap. Whether it be health, early childhood development, life expectancy, education...etc., it is important to specify how the organisation is/will be contributing to this initiative.

### **Something not clear?**

**Check with the RAP team** The above is a guide only, and should not replace the advice from your Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stakeholders. If, after consultations you find a difference in preferred terminology from the recommendations above, please contact us before submitting your RAP.