



Uniting Aboriginal & Islander
Christian Congress



4 August 2020

Joint statement: National Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day

As communities across Australia mark National Aboriginal and Islander Children’s Day, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC), UnitingCare Australia and UCA Redress Ltd have affirmed their commitment to progressing truth telling to shape a better future for the First Peoples children and young people of today.

“Our children are our future, and we all have a responsibility to ensure they are given the opportunity to thrive, to be their best and to realise their dreams,” said Pastor Mark Kickett, Interim UAICC National Chairperson.

“Our nation’s past is reflected in the present. If we are to break the cycle of intergenerational trauma and create a better future for our children, it is vital the whole community listens with an open heart and mind to the stories of the past and, having listened and understood, commits to healing historical wounds and safeguarding against past wrongs being repeated.

“This process of truth telling is vital to ensure our children can grow up knowing that their voices will be heard and valued,” said Pastor Kickett.

Sarah Lim, National Director of UCA Redress Ltd, acknowledged that the Uniting Church did not always provide kindness and care to those it was charged with looking after and that some of the most vulnerable children in the care of the Church were abused and neglected. Many of these were Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children. She stressed the Church’s commitment to ensuring past injustices are not repeated.

“We acknowledge and recognise the hurt and trauma experienced by First Peoples as a result of the Uniting Church’s past practices,” said Ms Lim. “The Uniting Church is committed to redress for survivors of abuse, and the safety of children continues to be at the forefront of our Church’s work with children and families.”

Claerwen Little, National Director of UnitingCare Australia, stressed the importance of services, schools and other institutions creating culturally safe and secure spaces where the voices of all First Peoples – including children – are heard, respected and learnt from.

“Hearing children’s voices plays a crucial role in their development towards being influential Elders, leaders and justice warriors of the future,” said Ms Little. “We are committed to working in solidarity with First Peoples to advocate for policies and programs that ensure First People’s children maintain their connection to Culture and community, and that ultimately empower them to stand and speak with strength.”

UnitingCare Australia is the national body for the Uniting Church’s community services network in Australia, supporting 1.4 million people each year across urban, rural and remote communities.

The Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress consists of Aboriginal and Islander members of the Uniting Church in Australia and members in fellowship.

UCA Redress Ltd is the national body for the Uniting Church in Australia to respond to, and provide support for, children and vulnerable persons who have suffered abuse at the hands of the Uniting Church or its institutions, including by participation in a nationally consistent equitable redress scheme.

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