



**Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress  
UnitingCare Australia  
Uniting Church in Australia  
4 August 2022**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Celebrating First Nations children and the hope of a new beginning**

As we celebrate National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (NATSI) Children's Day on 4 August, the Uniting Church reaffirms its commitment to ensuring First Nations children can shape their own future, grounded in culture and community.

Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) Interim National Chairperson Rev Mark Kickett encouraged Uniting Church communities to celebrate and commit to a new beginning and hope-filled future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

"Built on the pain of the past for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children, today we celebrate a new beginning, a new generation full of hope that has the right to celebrate, to live out and to truly be celebrated as First Nations. This is the way forward for a new beginning in the identity of this country," Rev Kickett said.

Reflecting on the theme, "My Dreaming, My Future", UAICC National Executive Member Alison Overeem said, "Every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child is born into story – a story that is connected to family, culture and community."

"By honouring the stories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, we provide culturally safe spaces for our children to thrive."

Alison, who is Advocate for the Walking Together as First and Second Peoples Circle, encouraged people across the Church to honour the deep connections to place and culture for First Nations children which are vital to healthy, flourishing futures. In a reflection, she writes,

"Today is the day to hold story deep  
To embrace our ancestors' stories to keep  
To look to our family, culture and community  
To be still and acknowledge the interwoven intergenerational unity  
The connection to place, the connection to culture of Ancestors past.  
The ever-flowing river that grounds us, that will forever last."

Alison said as the nation mourns the passing of inspirational singer-song writer and activist Archie Roach, we are reminded of the powerful words of his song, "Took the Children Away" which recalls the experience of the stolen generation.

"This song offers powerful truth-telling about the experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in this land. We lean into this song as we seek to honour the futures of our current generation of First Nations children."

Two young UAICC members shared their reflections on the theme:

"I dream for a world where children can grow up strong and be proud of themselves and their identity, where they are nurtured, respected and empowered to be who they are," said Nichola Overeem.

“I want a future where the cultural strength that holds a child together, continues to nurture them for the rest of their life, a future where the fundamentals of cultural practice, spirituality and empowerment don't fade. A future which is built on a culturally strong foundation,” said Grace Williams.

Uniting Church President Rev Sharon Hollis also encouraged people to mark NATSI Children's Day and to reflect on how we might provide spaces and build communities where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children can flourish.

As Prime Minister Anthony Albanese outlined plans for a referendum on a First Nations Voice to parliament, the President urged Uniting Church members to help garner support and begin conversations in their community about the call for a Voice to Parliament as outlined in the Uluru Statement of the Heart.

“Providing a mechanism for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to help inform decisions that impact their lives is one way we can both honour the place of First Nations people at the heart of the nation and help build a strong future for First Nations children.”

UnitingCare Australia National Director, Claerwen Little, said that we must heed the call for a First Nations Voice to Parliament and we will do everything we can to mobilise across our Church and our network.

“We commend the Federal Government for their commitment to establishing an enduring and constitutionally guaranteed Voice to Parliament. We believe this is a fundamental first step in addressing the unfinished business of our nation's relationship with First Peoples. It is a necessary and essential step and the time has come.”

For more information on Uniting Church advocacy on First Peoples, visit UnitingCare Australia: <https://unitingcare.org.au/advocacy-post/justice-for-first-peoples/> or read the Uniting Church Vision for a Just Australia, <https://uniting.church/a-vision-for-a-just-australia/>