

A Quaker Statement 50 years after the 1967 Referendum

We acknowledge the First Nations Peoples of Australia who have sustained this land for tens of thousands of years.

Our Quaker testimonies call us to be in right relationship with all peoples. As Quakers we are learning how to uphold First Nations' Peoples and their descendants in Australia, in our joint ongoing journey towards justice.

We long for and are working towards a reconciled Australia, believing that the coming into right relationship between First Peoples, the original custodians of the land, and other Australians is fundamental to an inclusive non-violent, Australian society.

The 1967 referendum, enabling the Australian Commonwealth Government to pass laws in relation to First Nations and to include them in the Australian census, raised hopes that have not been fulfilled. First Nations Peoples tell us that, despite some improvements, they still see themselves at the 'bottom of the pile' in health, education and wellbeing.

We are mindful that the life we enjoy today is the result of the invasion and dispossession of their land, which led to the destruction of their culture and way of life. The continuing trauma from colonization damages us all.

The European perspective shaping much of the history of Australia has prevented us from valuing and embracing the wisdom and knowledge of the world's oldest continuing culture. We are and can all be enriched by their wisdom and knowledge.

We deplore the continuing devastation of culture, for example the overreaching of the Northern Territory Intervention, the continuing struggle of First Peoples to control their lands and resources, their over-representation in the prison system, the removing of children, substance abuse and suicide.

To create the peaceful co-existence we seek, we need to acknowledge the past in all its complexities, provide reparation for past and current injustices, and recognize the wisdom in all our cultures, perhaps through a truth and reconciliation process.

Therefore, we commit to 'Come Right Way' and 'Care Right Way' and seek in our daily lives to:

- educate ourselves about the history and present reality of the First Peoples of the lands we reside on, and uphold their right to self-determination;
- understand the issues surrounding recognition and sovereignty;
- learn from the history of the complex relationship between First Nations and other peoples, spanning massacres to cooperation;
- foster respect for sacred places and newer sites of significance e.g., Tent Embassies and city parks;
- discern the racism within ourselves, and work towards justice, peace and healing for us all.



Presiding Clerk
Australia Yearly Meeting
July 2017, on Kurna country