



National Close the Gap Day

Today marks the 10th anniversary of the Close the Gap initiative Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Yolŋu First People from north-eastern Arnhem Land and others around the nation continue to raise many concerns, particularly health.

For those who choose to listen, their overarching message is clear: the dominant Australian legal and governance structures need to engage with First Peoples towards recognition of their sovereignty and to negotiate treaties for all.

Australia's Second Peoples live on occupied land as guests.

In 2015, the 14th Assembly of the Uniting Church in Australia agreed to support Constitutional Recognition as a "step towards and not a blockage to the larger issues of sovereignty and treaty."

The 14th Assembly also committed to work with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress to "educate members of the Church about the need for a treaty" and to highlight issues faced by First Peoples.

In my Survival Day message on 26 January this year I called for a wider national conversation about sovereignty and treaty.

Today and in the weeks and months ahead I repeat that call.

As someone who has worked closely with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples over four decades, I firmly believe this:

We can never be a mature nation and close the gap until we honour First People as sovereign and negotiate treaties on just terms.

Stuart McMillan
President
Uniting Church in Australia Assembly

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