

First Peoples Solidarity Statement

As part of a continuing journey to express our desire for reconciliation and solidarity with the First Peoples of Australia, the Aboriginal and Islander people, Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania:

ACKNOWLEDGES with respect the First Peoples, their nations, their elders and their families, past and present;

AFFIRMS that Australia is a land created and sustained by God and inhabited for thousands of years by the First Peoples, as the custodians of the land and its resources;

EXPRESSES deep sadness and regret at the injustice and mistreatment suffered by the First Peoples as a result of European colonisation, which includes dispossession of their land and cultural losses, leading to profound suffering, grief and loss by generations of First Peoples;

CONFESSES that the Gospel witness of the Churches of Christ of Victoria and Tasmania, although well intentioned and done in a spirit of servant-hood, was at times insensitive to existing cultural and linguistic traditions and contributed to their permanent loss;

FURTHER CONFESSES we have been complicit with other non-Indigenous Australians in promoting and defending the paternalistic, racist and economic values of the dominant society at the expense of the First Peoples and in denial of their human rights;

SAYS SORRY and seeks forgiveness for any hurt we have caused from any wrong that we have done.

REJOICES in the common humanity of all Australians, equally created in the Image of God; and in the deeper spiritual relationship shared by those who confess Jesus Christ as Lord;

STANDS in solidarity with, and give thanks for, all who pursue justice and reconciliation for the First Peoples in sincerity and truth; and welcomes dialogue that leads to action.

CONCEDES that complete justice can never be achieved as it would require restoration of all that was taken from the First Peoples.

CALLS ON all in Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania to work together with the First Peoples and with all governments and authorities to redress the wrongs of the past and help to heal the prevailing wounds inflicted in order to establish Australian society on a more just and harmonious foundation; and

URGES every church and agency affiliated with Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania to consider ways to intentionally engage with the First Peoples, in their local communities or beyond and to consider ways in which they might support and sustain Indigenous ministry initiatives as a sign of our commitment to unity and reconciliation in the Kingdom of God.

The Statement was adopted at the May 4, 2013 AGM of Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania Inc. (CCVT) At that meeting it was resolved "That Churches of Christ in Victoria and Tasmania adopts the following First Peoples Solidarity Statement; that the Statement be incorporated in the CCVT Constitution and Affinity and be contained in an appropriately constructed page on the CCVT website; and that CCVT Council be requested to form the necessary amendments to the Constitution and Affinity for presentation and adoption at the 2014 CCVT AGM".