

PRAYER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Holy Spirit, we invoke your blessing on this country and on us as we gather today.

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders of this place, both past, present and emerging, and the continued cultural and spiritual connection to the lands and waters.

We also acknowledge that our forbearers came into these sacred spaces, changing forever an older way of life.

Bless our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters and bless us.

Help us to join our hands and hearts together.

Help us to heal one another and the land, so that our lives may flow with harmony and that we may live with love and deep respect.

AMEN.



MISSION, VISION & ASPIRATION



OUR MISSION

The St Vincent de Paul Society is a lay Catholic organisation that aspires to live the gospel message by serving Christ in the poor with love, respect, justice, hope and joy, and by working to shape a more just and compassionate society.



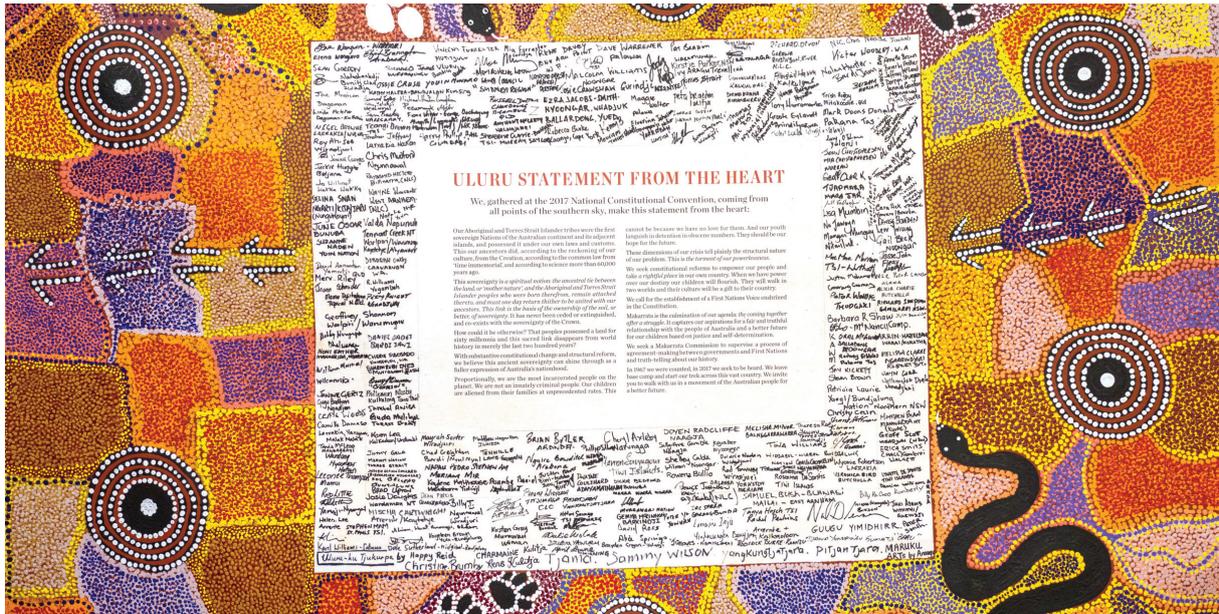
OUR VISION

The Society aspires to be recognised as a caring Catholic charity offering “a hand up” to people in need. We do this by respecting their dignity, sharing our hope, and encouraging them to take control of their own destiny.



OUR ASPIRATION

An Australia transformed by compassion and built on justice. The Society advocates on several pressing social justice issues such as homelessness, poverty and people seeking asylum.



THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

We, gathered at the 2017 National Constitutional Convention, coming from all points of the southern sky, make this statement from the heart:

Our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander tribes were the first sovereign Nations of the Australian continent and its adjacent islands, and possessed it under our own laws and customs.

This our ancestors did, according to the reckoning of our culture, from the Creation, according to the common law from 'time immemorial', and according to science more than 60,000 years ago. This sovereignty is a spiritual notion: the ancestral tie between the land, or 'mother nature', and the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who were born therefrom, remain attached thereto, and must one day return thither to be united with our ancestors.

This link is the basis of the ownership of the soil, or better, of sovereignty. It has never been ceded or extinguished, and co-exists with the sovereignty of the Crown. How could it be otherwise? That peoples possessed a land for sixty millennia and this sacred link disappears from world history in merely the last two hundred years?

With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood.

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With substantive constitutional change and structural reform, we believe this ancient sovereignty can shine through as a fuller expression of Australia's nationhood. Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We see our nation as a land of criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future. These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of our problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness. We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country. We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Makarrata is the culmination of our agenda: the coming together after a struggle. It captures our aspirations for a fair and truthful relationship with the people of Australia and a better future for our children based on justice and self-determination. We seek a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history. In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.

Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates.

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CONTEMPLATING OUR LOGO

Our Society Logo holds much significance to the ministry of the Society.



**The hand of Christ
blesses the cup**



**The hand of love
offers the cup**



**The hand of suffering
receives the cup**

In 2022 The Society introduced our First Nations shirts, designed by Mitchell Saddler, Director Commercial Enterprise.

The image represented here looks at the very significant journey we are on as an organisation towards reconciliation and being led by our First Nations leaders within the Society.

The image reflecting our logo, is not a replacement, but a beautiful representation of friendship on this journey together. It also holds a unique challenge to us to look at power imbalances and to see the strength, resilience, and leadership of where we connect with our First Australians within the Society.



VINNIES VALUES



COMMITMENT

Loyalty in service to our mission, vision and values.



COMPASSION

Welcoming and serving all with understanding and without judgement.



RESPECT

Service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions.



INTEGRITY

Promoting, maintaining and adhering to our mission, vision and values.



EMPATHY

Establishing relationships based on respect, trust, friendship and perception.



ADVOCACY

Working to transform the causes of poverty and challenging the causes of human injustice.



COURAGE

Encouraging spiritual growth, welcoming innovation and giving hope for the future.

WHY THE SOCIETY SUPPORTS THE ULURU STATEMENT

The Society's support for the Uluru Statement is part of our ongoing commitment to reconciliation. It reflects The Society's mission to shape a more just and compassionate society.

By supporting the Uluru Statement and a Voice we are supporting First Nations peoples who have suffered greatly as a result of colonisation.

First Nations people comprise around one-fifth of the people that we assist. By supporting the

Uluru Statement and a Voice to parliament, we will help to reduce poverty and injustice experienced by First Nations people.

A First Nations Voice to Parliament is consistent with the Society's vision to encourage people to take control of their own destiny.

The Catholic Church officially endorsed the Uluru Statement at the Fifth Plenary Council in July 2022.

THE RULE

The Uluru Statement of the Heart holds three elements of reform: Voice, Treaty, Truth.

The Vincentian Rule shares some similar expressions of spirit and advocacy, listening through prayer and action always the voice crying in the wilderness;

“The Society serves those in need regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions” 1.4

“Vincentians strive to seek out and find those in need and the forgotten, the victims of exclusion or adversity” 1.5

“Vincentians...helps them to feel and recover their own dignity, for we are all created in God's image...”1.8

“Vincentian...do not judge those they serve, rather they seek to understand them as they would a brother or sister” 1.9

“The Society helps...the disadvantaged speak from themselves. When they cannot, the Society must speak on behalf of those who are ignored.” 7.5

“Vincentians oppose discrimination of all kinds and work to change the attitudes of those who view the weak and those who are different with prejudice, fear or scorn, attitudes which gravely wound the dignity of others.” 7.7



CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING

Frederic Ozanam expressed a strong social conscience in; “*Knowledge of the poor and needy is not gained by pouring over books or in discussions with politicians, but by visiting the slums where they live, sitting by the bedside of the dying, feeling the cold they feel and learning from their lips the causes of their woes.*”

Catholic Social Teaching is best described as teaching “found at the crossroads where Christian life and conscience come into contact with the real world”. These teachings were developed through the Papal Encyclical *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII in 1891. It was expressed at Frederic’s beatification that *Rerum Novarum* formally echoed the voice of Frederic Ozanam in word and action.

The Society embraces the principles of Catholic Social Teaching to guide the Mission and Ethos of the Society.

The themes of Catholic Social Teaching are:

1. Dignity of the Human Person
2. The Common Good
3. Solidarity
4. Subsidiarity
5. Participation
6. Care for our Common Home
7. Preferential Option for the Poor

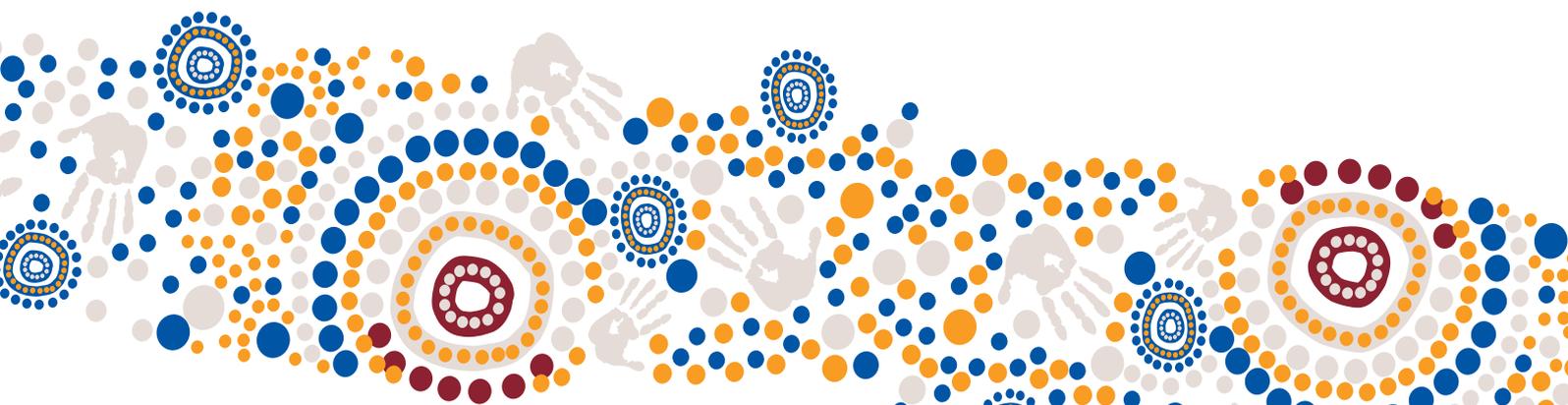
Our Vincentian spirituality and actions are weaved through these themes, and the message of the Uluru Statement from the Heart calls us to act and support the Statement in order to uphold our values and guiding principles found in Catholic Social Teaching.

Human life at every stage of development and decline is precious and therefore worthy of protection and respect. It is always wrong directly to attack human life. The Catholic tradition sees the sacredness of human life as part of any moral vision for a just and good society.

Why a preferential love for the poor? Because the common good– the good of society as a whole– requires it. The opposite of rich and powerful is poor and powerless. If the good of all, the common good, is to prevail, preferential protection must move toward those affected adversely by the absence of power and the presence of privation. Otherwise, the balance needed to keep society in one piece will be broken to the detriment of the whole.

The principle of solidarity leads to choices that will promote and protect the common good.

Solidarity calls us to respond not simply to personal, individual misfortunes; there are societal issues that cry out for more just social structures, especially for the Voice of our First Nations peoples. For this reason, the Society’s Mission calls us today not only to engage in charitable works but also to work towards social justice.



SPIRITUAL REFLECTION

ISAIAH 40: 3-5

- ³ The voice of one calling out, “Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make straight in the desert a path for our God.
- ⁴ Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; And let the uneven ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley;
- ⁵ Then the glory of the Lord will be revealed, and all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken.”

When we think of the wilderness sometimes, we are reminded of rough terrain or barren deserts. We see the wilderness again in New Testament before Jesus is crucified, he is led by the Spirit into the wilderness. This time was one of immeasurable pain for Jesus. So, when we hear about the wilderness in this passage from Isaiah, we also hear that a voice of one cries out right here. What is the pain in this wilderness?

From this place of pain, where there is isolation and harsh conditions, a voice of one cries out! We can view this as a single voice, like the voice we recall from Exodus with Moses and the burning bush, or the still small voice of God in a rushing wind. Or, we can see this as one united voice! A voice of unity from the places of pain and despair, within this wilderness comes a collective cry to make the paths straight.

We are asked in the Uluru Statement from the Heart to walk with our First Nations peoples in unity with them for truth seeking, treaty and A VOICE. From our very own wilderness within our Nation’s brutal history we are called to raise the valleys and smooth out the uneven ground and take our part in a more just and compassionate society.

This passage of scripture finishes with what we can reflect on as a commissioning from God for this most important demand. Preparing these paths, walking in unity and being a voice of one will then reveal the glory of the Lord, that the Lord has spoken. We must always look for opportunities where we can speak into the darkness of the wilderness of our days and do whatever good works are at our hands for sake of dignity, truth and restoration.

REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- 1. In what ways have you been led by the Spirit into the wilderness?**
- 2. What aspects of the wilderness can you connect to the pain our First Nations Peoples have endured?**
- 3. What actions can we do as Vincentians to show our united support for a Voice?**



PRAYERS FOR PEACE

PRAYER OF ST FRANCIS OF ASSISI

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O, Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to understand;
to be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.

INDIGENOUS PRAYER OF BLESSINGS

May our footsteps, on these ancient lands, remind us of
creation and connectedness, in our search for truth.

May the Gum Tree, from its roots to its branches, remind us to
dig deep and reach high in our action for justice, peace, healing
and reconciliation.

May the wedge-tail Eagle, who soars in the sky, remind us of
the power, in our call for love.

May the expanse of the lands and seas, of the sky and stars,
remind us of God's timing in our faith in hope.

May the Holy Three, Creator Spirit, Lord God, brother Jesus,
reminds us of community as one nation in faith, hope and love.

Amen¹



¹ Rev Brooke Prentis, Australian Aboriginal Christian leader, who is descended from the Wakka Wakka people and serves in Ipswich in Indigenous ministries