Morning Lifestyle on Ultra 106.5fm Hobart & Southern Tasmania

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Dave: You're listening to Morning Lifestyle with Dave as part of NAIDOC Week which runs right through to the 13th of July. Time to learn about and celebrate the continued history, culture and achievements of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our country. And from the St Vincent de Paul Society, the National President Mark Gaetani is joining us to talk about it. Mark, welcome along.

Mark: Thanks very much, David, and it's a pleasure to be speaking with you today.

Dave: The NAIDOC Week theme this year, Next Generation: Strength, Vision and Legacy, an interesting theme for this particular 50th marking of NAIDOC Week

Mark: It certainly is, David. The theme is really pretty self-explanatory. What we're asking is, what we as a community are asking through this NAIDOC theme is, to obviously honour the achievements of the past in terms of what we have achieved and those Indigenous, both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders who have contributed a lot to what's been achieved. But we're also reaching out to young leaders in our Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to take the beacon and move forward from those in the past to continue on with their advocacy and activism for those folk in our community.

Dave: Now, I know Vinnie does a lot of work with people from Indigenous backgrounds as part of your meeting some of the needs with the closing of the gap closing so slowly, but you're still there and reaching out to them to try and help to make it better for the next generation.

Mark: Look, we do, David, indeed. Approximately 20% of the individuals that we support on a daily basis across Australia actually identify as Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander people. So that's a pretty high representation. Obviously, you would expect Northern Territory and Queensland for those numbers to be higher. Well, indeed, I can inform your listeners that 90% of the folks that we assist in the Northern Territory do identify as Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander folks. So, yeah, the Northern Territory plays a big role in supporting NAIDOC Week

Dave: Victoria's right in the middle of a truth-telling and treaty process. South Australia moved towards a Voice-type model that they're starting to implement, but it seems to be sort of a bit of an ad hoc approach to this. There's not a national idea because the voice referendum resulted in the way in which it did, but somehow we need to reach out to the First Nations people, hear their stories and find ways to go forward together.

Mark: Look, you're exactly right, David, and the St Vincent de Paul Society, in conjunction with an organisation known as Catholic Religious Australia, we're actually calling for a national approach to truth-telling that informs and supports the local state and territory processes and provides a national repository for Australian history. Whilst, you know, the states that you've named, Victoria, South Australia, etc., are sort of going out on their own, we feel as though a national approach also needs to be taken with a national voice as opposed to individual state and territories.

Dave: Well, it's an important week, this first week of the school holidays being NAIDOC Week for 2025. Next Generation: Strength Vision and Legacy. Mark, thanks for joining us on our program to talk about the wonderful work at Vinnies and also the way in which you've reached out throughout this particular time of the year.