

13 June 2023

Dear members of the Kildare Ministries Community

The 2017 Uluru ***Statement from the Heart***, written by representative groups of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, is a deep expression of hope for the future of Australians. It declares, “in 1967 we were counted, and [now] we seek to be heard”. Voice, Treaty, Truth Telling, are the three stages identified in the Uluru Statement that will begin to establish right relationships with our First Nations people.

Later this year, Australians will be required to vote in the referendum on ***The Voice***. This is a significant historical moment that will enshrine First Nations’ voice in the Constitution.

The oldest continuous culture in the world, of more than 65,000 years, deserves our respect. First Nations people are seeking to be consulted on issues that affect their own lives and wellbeing. For too long this has not been the case. We understand the deep hurt of these past 234 years, captured by, “this is the torment of our powerlessness”, (Uluru Statement of the Heart) in a land that was never ceded.

The oldest continuous culture in the world, is to be celebrated as a gift. First Nations people are our only way of truly knowing who we are as Australians on this land. Our learning can be deepened and enhanced by listening to the advice and perspective of our local elders, indigenous students and staff who attend and work in our schools. Also by reading the wisdom and experience of people who have worked in this space for over a decade, including Fr Frank Brennan, Noel Pearson, Vicki Clark and the reader of the Uluru Statement, Megan Davis.

The Trustees of Kildare Ministries are steadfast and consistent with their commitment to inclusive and empowered communities and see this as a fuller expression of our Vision and Mission statement and a reflection of our Values in action. *The Voice to Parliament* is a first step towards a better Australia. It is one that unites us and one that respects and dignifies the oldest culture in the world. In the tradition of the founding charisms, Kildare Ministries acknowledges the sacredness of the land known as Our Common Home.

The Trustees of Kildare Ministries support the referendum on the Constitution.

Yours faithfully



Rosemary Copeland
Co-Chair



Kathy McEvoy
Co-Chair