

5.11. SUPPORT FOR THE ULURU STATEMENT FROM THE HEART

REPORT AUTHORS	Alexandra Earl, Community Development Officer Danni Morache, Team Leader Community and Economic Development
MANAGER	Lisa Golding, Manager People and Community Services
DEPARTMENT	People and Community Services

RECOMMENDATION

That Council supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The authors of the Uluru Statement from the Heart call it ‘an invitation to the Australian people’ and ask all ‘*Australians to accept our invitation to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.*’

The Uluru Statement from the Heart represents an opportunity for the Commonwealth Government of Australia to explore ways to improve communication with Indigenous people about issues that affect their wellbeing.

Council also recognises that the Australian Government has committed to undertaking a referendum of the Australian people in 2023 about changing the constitution to enshrine a Voice to Parliament. The referendum and its outcome and the shape of any potential Voice to Parliament is outside the scope of this report and will be determined by the Commonwealth Government and voting Australians.

A copy of the Uluru Statement from the Heart is provided as an attachment.

BACKGROUND

The Uluru Statement from the Heart was issued in May 2017, by delegates to the First Nations National Constitutional Convention, at Uluru on the lands of the Anangu people. The statement was signed by over 250 delegates from across Australia.

Nearly 8% of the population of the Douglas Shire local government area identifies as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. Council strongly supports open and meaningful communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Many local governments across Australia and Queensland have begun endorsing and adopting the principles of the Statement.

COMMENTS

The Statement is regarded as a significant moment for recognition and reconciliation between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australians.

Council recognises that the process for responding to the Uluru Statement and determining outcomes and actions is yet to be finalised and lies within the jurisdiction of the Commonwealth Government.

PROPOSAL

That Council affirms and endorses the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial requirements of this action.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

Council may face reputational risk by choosing not to support the Uluru Statement.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

Economic: A greater say in the laws and policies that affect Indigenous Australians may lead to increased economic development and participation in the economy.

Environmental: Greater involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in environmental decision-making may lead to better resource and land management, and environmental stewardship.

Social: Greater input into decision-making and reconciliation intends to address and improve the ongoing social and cultural impacts on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities.

CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

Corporate Plan 2019-2024 Initiatives:

Theme 1 - Celebrating Our Communities

Douglas Shire Council embraces the diversity of our communities and values the contribution that all people make to the Shire. We recognise that it is a core strength of the region. We acknowledge our past so that it may guide us in the future. We recognise the wrongs done to our Indigenous community and we actively seek to reconcile so that we may all benefit from and enjoy our Shire. We acknowledge early European settlers who forged an agricultural base for our economy and we welcome all new arrivals as part of our broader community.

Goal 1 - We will celebrate the diversity of our community and ensure that all infrastructure, programs, and services are underpinned with inclusiveness and accessibility.

Operational Plan 2022-2023 Actions:

New project arisen during the financial year.

COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

Advocate Council makes representation on behalf of the community on important issues, funding opportunities, projects and programs. Council will use its influence to seek the best outcomes for the community.

CONSULTATION

Internal: Discussed with Councilors at workshops on 21 March and 17 April 2023.

External: Discussed with the FNQROC Mayors at a meeting on 2 February 2023.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Nil

ATTACHMENTS

1. Uluru Statement from the Heart [5.11.1 - 1 page]

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.

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. 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.