



## Women Lawyers Association of New South Wales

### Support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart

The Executive Committee of the Women Lawyers Association of NSW supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart, and the campaign for a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

In the Mabo decision the majority of the High Court recorded that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples “*were dispossessed of their land parcel by parcel, to make way for expanding colonial settlement. Their dispossession underwrote the development of the nation.*”

We sincerely hope that by listening to a First Nations Voice, and by the achievement of Treaty and Makarrata, all Australians will learn how they can help to alleviate the consequences of dispossession, and contribute to a better future for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

We encourage all WLANSW members to become familiar with the meaning and message of the Uluru Statement, and its key objectives of Voice, Treaty and Truth telling:<sup>1</sup>

#### **ULURU 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***

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<sup>1</sup> More information, including a recital of the Uluru Statement by Professor Megan Davis, can be found at <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement>.

*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.