

**STILL  
NO VOICE**

**IF NOT NOW...  
WHEN?**

**Vocabulary Relating to  
the Planned Referendum  
for an Indigenous Voice  
to Parliament**



**Pilgrim Uniting Church**

## Here is a range of vocabulary and phrases relating to the planned Referendum for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament in 2023.

### A

**Aborigines (see also Indigenous):** People who have been in a country or region from earliest times.

**Aboriginal:** The adjectival form of Aborigines, as in Aboriginal people. At one point, many preferred this to be used as a noun as in Aborigines. Now the terms Indigenous, First Nations, First People and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are preferred terms.

**Alienated:** This is used in two contexts. Firstly, in that First Nations Peoples were alienated from their lands when the British government of the 18th century claimed sovereignty. It is also used regarding members of the Stolen Generations, and their descendants, being alienated from their families, inducing feelings of estrangement and isolation. The Uluru Statement from the Heart uses the term “alienated”.

### **ATSI (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders):**

This term is used to recognise that the people of Torres Strait Island are First Peoples with a different culture to many of the mainland Aboriginal groups. It is preferred that First Peoples are not referred to by the acronym ATSI.

### **ATSIC (the former Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission):**

From 1990 until 2005, this was the national government body through which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were formally involved in government decisions about matters that affected them, through local representation. It was established by the Hawke Labor government and abolished by the Howard LNP government following allegations of corruption. A number of Indigenous programs fell under the overall umbrella of ATSIC. The proposed Voice will be a similar consultative body to the federal government but will not have oversight of day-to-day programs.

**Anangu:** Pitjantjatjara word for the people.

**Annexation:** a formal act of taking over another people’s territory and claiming it as your sovereign territory, usually without a treaty.

## B

**Being Heard** means to be understood.

Being heard in a relationship involves your thoughts and feelings mattering to the listener. Rather than passive listening, it paves the way for a deep sense of trust.

**Belonging** is a sense of closeness to a place or group. First Peoples of Australia express a sense of belonging to both the land and their community. Unfortunately, many do not feel a sense of belonging to the nation of Australia due to the injustices of the past and present.

## C

**Ceded** means to give up power or territory.

First Peoples say that their right to their land was never ceded when the British claimed sovereignty.

**Colonisation** is the act of taking control of an area or a country that is not your own, especially using force, and sending people from your own country to live there.

**Conquest** means taking control of a people or place by military force.

**Constitution** is a legal and political document

which outlines the basic principles and laws of a nation, state, or social group that determine the powers and duties of the government and guarantee certain rights to the people in it. First Nations peoples' prior occupation of the continent of Australia is not acknowledged in the 1901 Constitution of Australia.

**Cultural Awareness** means being sensitive to the differences between two cultures when communicating or interacting with members of other cultural groups. Intercultural Understanding is one of the cross-curriculum priorities in the Australian National Curriculum.

## D

**Dadirri See below, "Deep listening".**

**Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples** is a 2007 United Nations Declaration. It recognises that indigenous peoples across the world have suffered from historic injustices as a result of the colonization and the dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, preventing them from exercising their right to development according to their own needs and interests.

**Detention / Youth Detention** is the facility where people under the age of 18 years of

age are held, usually for short periods of time in order to await trial hearings and further placement. There has been considerable controversy over youth detention centres across Australia where the majority of inmates are young First Nations people. Example of facilities that have had recent publicity and inquiries are Dondale in the Northern Territory and Banksia Hill in WA.

**Deep Listening** is sometimes referred to as “Dadirri” in the Ngan’gikurunggurr and Ngen’giwumirri languages of the Daly River, south of Darwin. It is a practice of deep listening and acceptance. It is a method that develops trust, based on respect when working with indigenous people and allowing their voices to be heard.

**Doctrine of Discovery:** also known as the Doctrine of Christian Discovery was a Papal edict in 1493 at the start of the age of imperialism when many European countries explored the world and laid claim to lands that they argued were not occupied by Christians. Originally developed to justify the taking of South American lands by the Spanish. It established the concept of “Terra Nullius” - waste and unoccupied lands. This doctrine was used in order to legitimize

the colonisation of lands outside of Europe. The age of European empire-building or imperialism dated from the mid 1700s until the early 1900s. Examples of colonisation are in India, South America, South East Asia, Africa and Australia.

## E

**Education,** in the context of the call for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, requires all Australians to learn about the colonisation of Australia, its impact on the social, cultural, economic life and wellbeing of the First Peoples and the reasons why the Uluru Statement from the Heart calls for Voice, Treaty, Truth. There are many online resources to assist self-education and cultural awareness.

**Empowerment:** The process of becoming stronger and more confident, especially in controlling one’s life and claiming one’s rights.

**Extinguished** To destroy or put an end to, as extinguishment of First Peoples’ sovereignty which was not recognised through a treaty process in the colonisation of Australia.

## F

### **First Nations / Second Nations / Third Nations:**

Originally used in Canada when referring to descendants of the original inhabitants of Canada, it is now widely used across Australia, along with other terms to reference the first peoples of Australia such as “First Peoples”, “Indigenous Australians” and “Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples”. For a good reference point on such terminology see <https://www.actcoss.org.au/sites/default/files/public/publications/gulanga-good-practice-guide-preferences-terminology-referring-to-aboriginal-torres-strait-islander-peoples.pdf>

The term Second Nations people refers to all Australians who have arrived since the colonisation of Australia in the 18th and 19th centuries. Some people refer to Australians who have arrived post WW2, adding wider cultural and linguistic diversity, as “Third Nations” peoples.

**First Peoples:** See above.

**Frontier Wars/ Australian Wars:** The Australian frontier wars, which have more recently been described by some historians and First Nations film maker Rachel Perkins, as the

Australian wars, were the violent conflicts between First Nations peoples of Australia and non-Indigenous colonisers and “settlers” during the colonisation of Australia. The SBS screening of the documentary series *The Australian Wars* documents the battles fought on home soil, as the colonial frontier pushed forward, and First Nations peoples resisted. The period of these wars within Australia is often given as between 1788 and 1934. Raising awareness of this often-hidden part of Australia history is important in truth-telling. For an interactive map of the colonial frontier massacres see <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonialmassacres/map.php>.

## G

**Genocide** is the deliberate killing of a large number of people from a particular nation or ethnic group with the aim of destroying that nation or group.

**Gift to the Nation** is a term sometimes used to describe the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. The *Uluru Statement* is self-described as an invitation from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to “*walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future*”. It calls for structural reforms

including constitutional change to establish a Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

## H

### **Houses of Parliament / Chambers of Parliament**

The federal Parliament consists of two Houses which are also known as Chambers (the Senate and the House of Representatives), along with the King who is represented in Australia by the Governor General. Both Houses of Parliament will decide the details of the composition and processes of the Indigenous Voice to Parliament, if the 2023 referendum is successful. The Voice is not designed to be a third Chamber of Parliament.

**Humanity/Common Humanity** requires a shared disposition and behaviours that are compassionate, sympathetic, or generous.

## I

**Identity** is the unique set of characteristics that can be used to identify a person as themselves and no one else. For First Nations people, identity is closely tied to their membership of a First Nations people and their connection to land.

**Incarcerated** is the state of being imprisoned. Also known as detention in a prison.

**Indigenous** describes a people having very early connections to a country or territory. In describing Indigenous peoples of Australia, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, First Peoples. Each group also has a particular word commonly used in their own language to describe their affiliation with a particular group eg *Nungas* in the Adelaide area, *Yuras* in the Flinders Ranges and *Anangu* in the Pitjantjatjara, Yankunytjatjara and Antakirinja lands.

**Invasion:** means the conquering of a land and its people by armed force.

## J

**Justice** is a condition of fairness based on ethical principles and the rights of all people.

## K

**Kaurna** are the people of the Adelaide Plains with their broader lands extending from just south of Clare to the north of Adelaide and Cape Jervis in the south.

**Kokotha** (also spelt Kookartha, Kokartha, Gugada). Kokotha country covers a large area in the west of South Australia, including the land around Olympic Dam at Roxby Downs. It lies south of the Yankunytjatjara, Antakirinja and Arabana languages, west of the Barngarla language and north of the Wirangu language.

**Koori** is a term denoting an Aboriginal person of southern New South Wales or Victoria. 'Koori' is not a synonym for 'Aboriginal'. There are many other Aboriginal groups across Australia (such as Yura, Nunga, Anangu, Murri, Noongar, Yolngu) with which Indigenous Australians might identify themselves.

## L

**Legal** means an act or policy founded on law. The taking over the lands of Indigenous people in Australia was justified under British law, without consideration of the claims, rights and sovereignty of the First Peoples of this land.

## M

**Massacre** is the indiscriminate and brutal slaughter of many people. For an interactive map of the colonial frontier massacres see: <https://c21ch.newcastle.edu.au/colonial-massacres/map.php>.

**Mortality / Mortality Rate** is a measure of the frequency of occurrence of death in a defined population during a specified interval. In 2022, it was estimated that Aboriginal people die about 8 to 9 years earlier than non-Aboriginal Australians. On average, Aboriginal males live 71.6 years, 8.6 years less.

## N

**Nunga** is a term of self-identification used by First Peoples in parts of South Australia, originally used by Aboriginal people in the southern settled areas of South Australia, and now used throughout Adelaide and surrounding towns. It is used by contrast with Gunya, which refers to non-Aboriginal persons.

**Noongar** is a term of self-identification used by First Peoples of the south-west of Western Australia.

## O

**Occupation** is the action, state, or period of occupying or being occupied by military force as in the occupation of First Nation lands. Sometimes referred to as 'invasion'.

**Past Wrong** is an unfair or immoral action in the past.

**Possession** means having control or ownership of something such as land and resources.

## Q

**Question** means a sentence worded or expressed so as to gain information as in the question on which Australians on the electoral roll will vote in the planned referendum.

## R

**Racism** means prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community, or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a marginalised minority.

**Reconciliation** is the process of restoring good feelings after a disagreement. The 1991 *The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody* called for a national reconciliation process. The Council for Aboriginal Reconciliation was formed in the same year. This was replaced by Reconciliation

Australian in 2001. Under its auspice in 2012, *Recognise* was established as the campaign arm calling for the recognition of prior occupation of Australian by First Nations people in the Australian Constitution. Such a change requires a YES vote in a referendum on the topic. This official process was the precursor to the *2015 Uluru Statement from the Heart*.

**Referendum:** In Australia, a referendum is a vote used to approve a change to the Australian Constitution. Section 128 of the Constitution sets out certain rules that must be followed in order for a change to be approved.

**Religion/Faiths:** Religions and faiths are a collection of cultural systems, belief systems, and worldviews that relate humanity to spirituality and, sometimes, to moral values.

**Restorative Justice** refers to an approach to justice that seeks to repair harm by providing an opportunity for those harmed and those who take responsibility for the harm to communicate and address their needs following a crime or injustice.

**Revision**, in the context of recorded history, is the reinterpretation of orthodox views on evidence, motivations, and decision-making



processes surrounding an historical event. In an Australian context, some historians highlight evidence and perspectives that have been a part of what they call Australia's "hidden history". Examples of this is non-Indigenous historian Henry Reynolds's *Truth-Telling* (2021) and Indigenous historian, Bruce Pascoe's *Dark Emu: Aboriginal Australia and the Birth of Agriculture*.

## S

**Self-determination** is a process by which an individual, community or nation controls decisions about their life.

**Settlement** is when people are settling a place, that is moving to it. A settlement is a small, new colony; a new place for people to live. While colonial Australian history has traditionally called the colonisation of Australia "settlement", others describe the process as "invasion".

**Sovereignty** is the power of a country or nation to control itself. Australia was annexed by the British government which claimed sovereignty over the land. This is reflected in the current 1901 Australian Constitution. It does not recognise the prior sovereignty

of First Nations people. First Nations people cite their sovereignty based on spiritual and cultural relationships with the land.

**Spirituality:** Aboriginal spirituality is the belief that all objects are living and share the same soul or spirit that Indigenous Australians share. It is closely connected with the relationship with the land.

**Stolen Generations** refers to a period in Australia's history in which Aboriginal children were removed from their families sanctioned by government policies. This happened from the mid-1800s to the 1970s.

**Story-telling** are spiritual/religious explanations that explain the events of the creation of the landscape. Songlines, also called Dreaming tracks, are a form of Indigenous storytelling that brings understanding of the landscape. Recounts are told about the path of a creator - spirits during the Dreaming (Tjukurrpa).

**Survival:** Most commonly, the term 'survival' means physical survival — that is, a struggle to avoid physical extermination". Physical and cultural survival are common themes in First Nations narratives.

## T

**Terra Nullius** is a Latin term which means “waste and unoccupied”. While the term is not directly used in the Australian constitution of 1901, it was drafted in the spirit of “terra nullius” in that it does not recognise the prior sovereignty of the Indigenous people of Australia, the First Peoples.

### **Theology/Indigenous Theology:**

Indigenous Theology was born in Central and South America in the 1950s and 1960s in response to a demand for contextual theology which considers both the teachings of Christianity and the experiences and spiritualism of indigenous cultures.

For more information about the position taken on universal Indigenous theologies in 2009 by the World Council of Churches see:

**<https://www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents/sources-and-resources-of-indigenous-theologies>** .

For a South Australian explanation of Indigenous theology, see Rev Dr. (Aunty) Denise Champion's (Uniting Church Minister) works such as “Anaditj”. You can hear her speak on Voice Treaty Truth on a Pilgrim Uniting Church link to a symposium held in March

of 2022. <https://www.google.com/search?q=denise+champion&ei=xh->

**Treaty/Makarrata** is a word in the Yolngu language of the Peoples of North-East Arnhem Land meaning *a coming together after a struggle*, facing the facts of wrongs and living again in peace. *The Uluru Statement* seeks “a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history”.

**Truth-telling** is an opportunity for Indigenous Australians to record evidence about past events since colonisation and share their culture, heritage, history and experiences with the broader non-Indigenous community. It also involves non-Indigenous people accepting what has happened in Australian history as a part of colonisation.

**Tjukurrpa** is an Anangu (Pitjantjatjara) word describing the creation period when ancestral beings created the world. From this came Anangu religious/spiritual heritage, explaining their existence and guiding daily life.

## U

**Uluru** is the Pitjantjara name for what was known in, until recently, as Ayers Rock. It is a place of great spiritual significance. It was officially handed back to traditional owners on the 26th of October 1985.

**Uluru Statement from the Heart:** In 2016 and 2017, the Referendum Council led a series of Regional Dialogues, with First Nations peoples from across Australia, to discuss options for constitutional recognition. The purpose of these meetings was to ensure that Aboriginal decision making was at the heart of the process. The stories that were recounted in those Dialogues were collated and, along with the records of meetings, read to the First Nations Constitutional Convention at Uluru in May 2017 as “Our Story”. The Convention endorsed the work of the Dialogues and issued the Uluru Statement from the Heart to the Australian People.

**Urgency** is something requiring immediate action and attention.

## V

**Violence** is behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something.

**Voice**, as in Voice to Parliament, was called for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The petition called for an advisory body, called “the Voice”, to advise parliament and the federal government on policy matters that impact on First Nations peoples, including health, education, economic disadvantage, and social matters. The proposed referendum in 2023 focuses on including a First Nations Voice to Parliament, as acknowledgement of prior sovereignty, in the Australian constitution.

**Voice to Parliament** See above.

## W

**Waitangi Treaty (New Zealand)** is often given as an example of a different process of colonisation to that in Australia. It is a document of central importance to the history, to the political constitution of the state, and to the shared national psyche and culture of New Zealand. It has played a major role in the treatment of the Māori population in New Zealand,

by successive governments and the wider population, a role that has been especially prominent from the late 20th century. The treaty document is an agreement, not a treaty as recognised in international law and it has no independent legal status, being legally effective only to the extent it is recognised in various statutes. It was first signed on 6th of February 1840 by Captain William Hobson as consul for the British Crown and by Māori chiefs from the North Island of New Zealand.

## X

**Xenophobia** is an extreme, intense fear and dislike of customs, cultures, and people considered strange, unusual, or unknown.

## Y

**Yarning Circle**, in Aboriginal culture, is a place to talk, share, discuss, educate and have a yarn together, a place to build respectful relationships.

**Yolngu** is a term of self-identification used by First peoples in North-east Arnhem Land.

**Yura** is a term of self-identification used by Adnyamathanha people of the Flinders Ranges of South Australia.

**Zealot** is a person who is fanatical and uncompromising in pursuit of their religious, political, or other ideals.

**This Document was developed by Pilgrim Uniting Church through the Walking Together as First and Second Peoples Group.**

**Please contact us if you would like more information about joining the group.**



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