



# STATEMENT TO THE NATION

UNITING CHURCH IN AUSTRALIA, AUSTRALIAN BICENTENNIAL YEAR

1988

In this country which has been inhabited for 40,000 years, the Australian nation is celebrating the Bicentennial of the first European settlement. The Uniting Church, now in its second decade, greets our fellow Australian citizens on this occasion.

We give thanks for those times when the Australian society has established justice, equality, and mutual respect among people; has placed care for the people who have least above sectional interests; has welcomed new migrants and refugees; has exercised solidarity and friendship in times of crisis in Australia across divisions of race and culture; and has engaged constructively with the peoples of Asia, the Pacific and the rest of the world as peacemaker.

In the last two centuries the movements of history have brought together here in one nation, people of diverse cultures. As a church which is itself composed of people of many cultures and races, both Aboriginal and migrant, we rejoice in the vision of a multicultural society where these peoples may live together in unity and diversity, maintaining different cultural traditions, yet forging a common destiny based on commitment to the ideals of equality of opportunity, tolerance, justice and compassion.

At the same time, those of us who have migrated to Australia in the last two centuries or are the descendants of migrants, confess that all of us are beneficiaries of the injustices that have been inflicted on those of us who were Aboriginal people. In varying degrees, we all contribute to, and perpetuate those injustices. We recognise the violence which has been done to the Aboriginal people in the colonisation of this continent and the injustice by which Aborigines have been deprived of the land. We recognise the continuing Aboriginal experience of violence and injustice.

The integrity of our nation requires truth; the history of Australia, as it is taught in educational institutions or popularised in the media, must cease to conceal the reality and nature of Aboriginal society before invasion, what was done to them in colonisation, and what has been the fate and status of Aborigines within the Australian nation.

The integrity of our nation will be measured by action; by legislative action which honours the Aboriginal plea for justice, and by popular action by which the Australian people express their willingness to support Aboriginal Australians in the quest for justice and their struggle to reconstruct their society.

As for the Uniting Church in Australia, in obedience to God, in concern for the integrity of our nation, and in co-operation with all citizens of goodwill, we Aboriginal and newer Australians have determined to stand together.

In co-operation with all fellow Australians of goodwill, we are committed to work for justice and peace, calling for honesty and integrity, encouraging tolerance and compassion, challenging acquisitiveness and greed, opposing discrimination and prejudice, condemning violence and oppression and creating a loving and caring community.

We are conscious of conflicts and tensions within the nation and the world. We deplore the divisions of humanity along racial, cultural, political, economic, sexual and religious lines. In obedience to God, we struggle against all systems and attitudes which set person against person, group against group, or nation against nation.

We recognise a widening gap between the rich and the poor, not only within Australia, but within the whole human community. We will strive to uphold the rightful claims of the poor on the resources of this nation and the world. We will seek to identify and challenge all social and political structures and all human attitudes which perpetuate and compound poverty.



We affirm our belief that the natural world is God's creation; good in God's eyes, good in itself, and good in sustaining human life. Recognising the vulnerability of the life and resources of creation, we will work to promote the responsible management, use and occupation of the earth by human societies. We will seek to identify and challenge all structures and attitudes which perpetuate and compound the destruction of creation.

As a Christian church, born out of the struggles of Australian Christians to live in obedience to God in Australia, we find hope in Jesus Christ. We recognise that we Australian people are of diverse faiths and cultures and our desire is that we live together here in one community in justice, peace and mutual respect.

May the peace of God be with us all.

Sir Ronald Wilson, President

Rev. David Gill, General Secretary