



Australian Baptist Ministries

Statement on reconciliation with Indigenous Australians

The National Council of Australian Baptist Ministries, meeting on Wurundjeri land on Wednesday 25 May 2011, as part of our continuing journey to express our unity and solidarity with Australian Aboriginal and Islander peoples:

ACKNOWLEDGES with respect the Aboriginal and Islander elders past and present;

AFFIRMS that when Baptists first arrived in Australia they came to a land created and sustained by God and populated for thousands of years by Aboriginal and Islander peoples who were the custodians of the land and its resources;

EXPRESSES deep sadness and regret at the injustice and mistreatment suffered by Indigenous peoples as a result of European colonisation including dispossession of their land and culture, and leading to profound suffering, grief and loss by generations of Indigenous peoples;

RECOGNISES that for many years, through churches, missions and personal witness, Baptists have sought to share the good news of Jesus Christ in word and deed with Indigenous peoples with good intentions and in a spirit of servanthood;

CONFESSES that at times this Gospel witness was insensitive to existing cultural and linguistic traditions and contributed to their permanent loss;

FURTHER CONFESSES that at times Baptists have been complicit with other non-Indigenous Australians in promoting and defending the paternalistic, racist and economic values of the colonial society at the expense of the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and in denial of their human rights;

SEEKS forgiveness for the wrongs done to Indigenous peoples and the suffering they have endured;

REJOICES in the common human relationship that exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians; and in the deeper spiritual relationship shared by all who confess Jesus Christ as Lord;

GIVES THANKS FOR the ways in which past generations of Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous Baptists have sought to work together for the sake of the Gospel and the common good through friendship, dialogue, cooperation and organisation;

STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH all who pursue justice and mercy for Indigenous peoples in sincerity and truth;

WELCOMES dialogue on the forms which such justice and mercy might take;

URGES Federal, State and Local Governments to enact just laws and policies which enhance the wellbeing of Indigenous Australians with particular attention to health, housing, education and employment;

CALLS ON all Baptists in Australia to work together with Indigenous peoples to heal the wounds of the past and to establish Australian society on a more just and harmonious foundation; and

CALLS ON every Baptist church, Baptist Union and Baptist agency in Australia to consider ways in which practical reconciliation might be modelled as an expression of our commitment to Christian mission.