



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

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National unity needed to address First Nations challenges

Chair of the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Bishop Charles Gauci, has called for all Australians to unite in addressing the critical issues faced by the First Nations people.

Bishop Gauci highlighted the enduring and significant presence of First Nations communities in Australia, who have lived on this land for untold thousands of years.

The Bishop of Darwin emphasised the numerous challenges these communities continue to face, including disparities in life expectancy, high incarceration rates and pervasive violence.

"We face a number of challenges together with First Nations communities at the moment," Bishop Gauci said.

"We know that there is not much narrowing of the gap at all with life expectancy, incarceration, housing and violence. In some ways, the situation is getting even more complex as generations come and go."

Bishop Gauci underscored the complexity of the situation, acknowledging that there are no quick fixes and that any solutions must be rooted in the dignity of each human person, with profound respect for ancient cultures and the voices of the people affected.

He called for all sectors of society to rise above self-interest and political agendas to work towards the common good.

"I am making a heartfelt plea for all of us — whether it's governments, local, regional, federal, the Aboriginal communities, the churches — to come together," he urged.

"Rise above self-interest. Rise above politics and work out a way of moving forward."

Bishop Gauci proposed a unified, respectful, and experience-based approach to finding solutions, akin to the national unity seen during times of crisis.

"If there was a national crisis, such as a war, we would have a government of national unity. Well, I believe this is a situation of major significance for our nation, and we need to have a situation when we rise above politics.

"We need to do something. That is my heartfelt plea — that we reflect and with the grace of God, act together."