



AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE

Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Catholic Church says referendum result should usher in new era

MEDIA RELEASE

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Despite the referendum to establish an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice in the Constitution not succeeding, Australia needs to find a way to address the inequalities many First Nations people face, Bishop Charles Gauci has said.

Bishop Gauci, chair of the Bishops Commission for Relations with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, has issued a statement following yesterday's poll. He said although the idea of the Indigenous Voice to Parliament was not supported by a majority of Australians, "that doesn't mean we shouldn't do something".

The Bishop of Darwin said: "As I travel through the Northern Territory and beyond, I meet people from all walks of life who recognise that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples – the traditional custodians of our lands and waters for tens of thousands of years – struggle with poor outcomes in health, education, employment and a range of other areas.

"Australians know those poor outcomes are not good enough in the nation of the alleged 'Fair go'."

Bishop Gauci said while the debate leading up to the referendum was "intense and, at times, challenging", there was an "overwhelming consensus [...] that more should be done to address the injustice experienced by so many First Nations people".

He said that the Church, while not always living up to its own ideals, has been a driver of positive change for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through its parishes, schools, social services, and health and aged care services.

"At this moment in our history, it is time for the Church and its ministries to redouble our efforts to close the gap – not as a slogan, but as a commitment," Bishop Gauci said.

"That can only be done by, in the words of our recent Social Justice Statement, listening to, learning from and loving our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander brothers and sisters."

As the country processes the referendum outcome, Bishop Gauci said, "may we recognise and take up the challenge to create opportunities but also seek outcomes that will see inequalities in our country narrowed, a path to reconciliation pursued and a more prosperous nation emerge".

[Click here to read Bishop Gauci's statement.](#)