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## **Raising Our Tribal Voice for Justice: An Indigenous Theological Revolution**



2024  
CONFERENCE  
REPORT





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# Executive Summary

The “Raising our Tribal Voice for Justice: An Indigenous Theological Revolution” provided the School of Indigenous Studies opportunity to showcase the theological diversity that exist within Indigenous theology. The conference provided an opportunity to raise the profile of the next generation of Indigenous theologians and to hear the theological wisdom of the more established Indigenous theologians. The conference enabled Indigenous people to engage within their own theological context and to be culturally affirmed and to examine theology through their cultural lens. This was a very important moment for Indigenous Christians and church leaders to present and give recognition to our Indigenous philosophy, epistemologies and theological expression and reflection.

The following report presents analysis of the impact of the conference, the success of the social media (organic and paid) and PR Media channels utilised in the marketing strategy for the **“Raising our Tribal Voice for Justice: An Indigenous Theological Revolution”** conference, hosted by the University of Divinity School of Indigenous Studies from Monday February 5th to Thursday February 8th.

The primary objective is evaluating the impact of the conference and the effectiveness of marketing channels and provide compelling evidence to demonstrate the importance of this conversation to continue into the future.



# Introduction

The February 2024 “Raising Our Tribal Voice for Justice: An Indigenous Theological Revolution” conference, transcended expectations, drawing a sell-out crowd of 187 in-person participants, 10 esteemed speakers/keynotes, 9 people engaging as panellists and 7 University/SIS executive staff. Our livestream of the conference achieved the aims of providing reach to those unable to attend in person, facilitating a pivot to online for delegates who felt unwell, thereby reducing the risk of flu and Covid-19 contamination. With livestream ticket sales covering the cost of the livestream provider, a top of 190 views for a session and consistent viewing throughout the conference with an average of 101 views per session, this additional channel of access to the conference was highly successful.

A history first of bringing together Indigenous theologians from across Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific as well as church respondents across denominations, this event stood as a pivotal moment in Indigenous theological discourse. Placing Indigenous theologians at centre stage and as the main attraction has not happened before this conference. The delegate feedback serves as strong evidence of a highly positive impact with delegates feeling challenged and motivated to continue this conversation. One outcome from this is the commitment by Head of School of Indigenous Studies to host symposiums around Australia over the next 2 years to do exactly that and continue the dialogue on Indigenous theology.

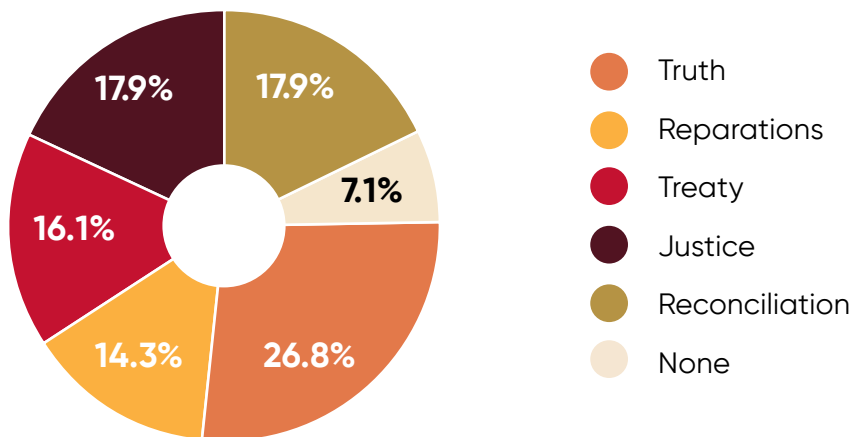
With a holistic marketing strategy, encompassing social media (organic and paid) and Public Relations (PR) channels to amplify the reach and foster engagement, the conference was a sellout which pushed virtual ticket sales up. This enabled funding for the post conference video assets to be used for a myriad of purposes. By optimising the presence of high calibre academics and professionals, we are in the enviable position of having obtained strong promotional content for use in promoting the next conference, encouraging sponsors to recommit funding, pledge promotion and School promotion also.

The School of Indigenous Studies express our deep gratitude to our sponsors of this conference, for making this conference possible and enabling us to achieve such significant impact and outcomes.

## Delegate Profile and Impact

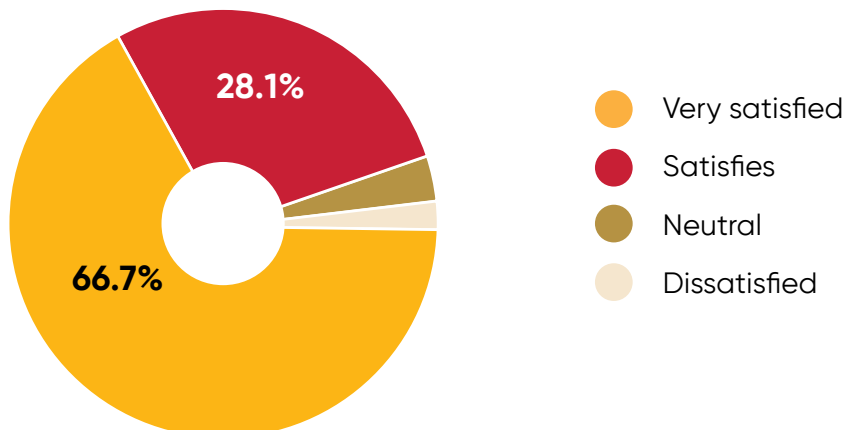
Our primary delegate's profile is a person who identified as female and non-Indigenous from Victoria. 43.9% of in person delegates identified as a church leader. The Anglican Church, Uniting Church in Australia and the Catholic Church denominations held the highest percentage of attendance with Anglican Church having the highest attendance with 21.4% of in person delegates.

The daily discussion groups of Truth, Reparations, Treaty, Justice and Reconciliation were incorporated to foster meaningful engagement and discussion by conference participants. These topics are organically difficult to approach. Nevertheless, engagement was high with 92.9% of in person delegates participating. The breakdown of participation is provided below.



78% nominated the group experience as highly inclusive and well facilitated or somewhat inclusive and satisfactorily facilitated. While overall this is a positive result, the learning for the discussion groups is to provide stronger guidance to the facilitators and to identify and populate individuals within these groups to provide delegate support when content became triggering. An unexpected positive outcome from the addition of multiple spaces (the quiet room, the marquee, the deck) was these areas held space for the provision of delegate support for individuals to retreat to when discussion group content became overwhelming.

Overall delegate experience was overwhelmingly positive with 94.8% nominating very satisfied or satisfied.



Generally positive comments were received from delegates speaking to their overall experience:

“ Thank you for all the attention to detail to ensure a care-filled hospitality. I am wearing my pledge bracelet and already in conversations to support education.

“ The timing was very well managed, food wonderful, good solid feeds, great people + I have been touched by the experiences.

Some comment feedback provided insights into areas for improvement such as ensuring more comfortable seating and better bathroom facilities.

Delegates self-reported the deep impact the conference had on them personally. For Indigenous delegates, there was a sense of hope which was desperately needed after the referendum result. It was challenging for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous delegates as content was confronting and working towards a solution, while providing hope, was emotionally and spiritually difficult.

The theological frameworks presented by the Indigenous theologians at the conference provided a new perspective on Indigenous theology. The colonial stereotype framework of a homogenous group was broken down through the conference as the differing perspectives were delivered. Concepts such as deep listening and Country were explored from the Indigenous theological perspective breaking new ground for many delegates.



## Sell-out Ticketing Findings via TryBooking

The preliminary analysis of ticketing data through TryBooking unveils significant observations regarding the effectiveness of our marketing strategies. A robust correlation between our social media effort is evident, with social media activity strategically linking TryBooking, playing a pivotal role in directing potential attendees to the platform.

Furthermore, the success of virtual ticket sales not only covered costs but also funded promotional asset development, attesting to the integrated approach's efficacy.

While the analysis indicates a strong association between social media efforts and ticket sales, the forthcoming post conference attendee survey feedback analysis holds promise for more granular insights. These insights will illuminate the attendee journey, aiding in refining marketing strategies for future conferences.












# Social Media Analysis

In the 2024 Post-Conference Marketing Analysis, Facebook emerges as the undeniable catalyst for our conference success. While our social media footprint extended across platforms like LinkedIn and X (formerly Twitter), the majority of registrations and engagement were orchestrated by the dynamic synergy of our organic and paid campaigns on Facebook. The insights below spotlight the pivotal role played by Facebook in steering our marketing efforts in connecting, engaging, and delivering conference leads and ticket sales.

## 1. Facebook Organic Social Media

-  Total # of posts: **39**
-  Engagements: **1,579**
-  Likes: **1,524**
-  Total Impressions: **17,391**
-  Shares: **308**
-  Comments: **15,431**
-  Total Reach: **2,967**

## 2. Facebook Paid Social Media/Ad Campaigns

Data Set	Data
Audience	62.6% Women 37.4% Men
Demographics	45yrs+ women greatest responders
Budget	\$1k per month (Oct – Dec 2023)
Paid Reach	27,125
Paid Impressions (when a user sees an ad)	85,503
Post engagements (an action by the viewer i.e. like, comment share, etc)	2,299
Link Click-throughs	1,629
Post reactions (like or other viewer sentiment)	534
Post Comments	68
Post Shares	57
Interactions (direct UD page interaction)	207
UD Website Visits	1,258
Video clicks	62
Cost per Click (CPC)*	\$0.38
Cost per lead	\$3.56
Leads (form)	336

\*Industry standard for CPC is \$0.63

Lead conversion strategy entailed email and cold calling follow-up to ensure conversion success. Unfortunately, internal staff issues caused delay to follow up calls which negatively impacted conversions. The learning from this experience is to ensure appropriately skilled staff are ready to respond to expressions of interest generated by a social media campaign.

### 3. PR /Media Analysis

Embarking on the journey of our inaugural conference, media outreach played a crucial role in forging awareness and engagement for both the conference and profile of the School of Indigenous Studies.

#### Media Outreach

Number of press releases: **3**

Release dates/themes:

*Coming in 2024 - Raising our Tribal Voice for Justice: An Indigenous Theological Revolution*

Release date: 11/9/2023.

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*Raising our Tribal Voice for Justice - An Indigenous Theological Revolution Conference Adds Keynote Speaker Professor Stan Grant.* Release date: 6/12/2024.

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*Historic Recognition Ceremony Honours Dr Aunty Jean Phillips with Doctor of Divinity.*

Release date: 12/2/2024.

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**Media distribution** was via the University of Divinity Media Database to up to 50 national and local media outlets. In addition to this a wider reach was achieved via Medianet ensuring 499 requests were sent, 492 were delivered and 33% of these were opened for the first media release announcing the conference on 6 December 2023.

**Key wins** Secured media attendance at conference, by key journalists including ABC Radio National (Dr Meredith Lake) and The Melbourne Anglican (Jena Taylor).



## Media Coverage

Significant presence and coverage orchestrated by Dr. Meredith Lake, the host of ABC's *Radio National Soul Search* program.

Dr. Lake attended the conference for a full day to host thought provoking interviews with speakers and delegates alike. The culmination of her efforts resulted in a captivating one-hour edited program, broadcasted on national radio, casting a spotlight on the essence and impact of our inaugural conference.

ABC National Soul Search with Dr Meredith Lake (1 hour segment/Conference highlights) - 15 Feb 2024 <https://www.abc.net.au/listen/programs/soul-search/an-indigenous-theological-revolution/103402356>

In addition, also in attendance was The Melbourne Anglican - one of Australia's most respected Christian newspapers who published an article within 24 hours of the conference commencement on February 5, 2024.

<https://tma.melbourneanglican.org.au/2024/02/truth-and-love-the-aim-at-indigenous-spirituality-gathering/>

### Links to other national media coverage include: -

World Communion of Reformed Churches - 16 Feb 2024

<https://wrc.ch/blog/member-church-news-voices-liturgies-visits>

Uniting Church in Australia Assembly website - 14 Feb 2024

<https://uniting.church/raising-our-tribal-voice-for-justice/>

Insights (Uniting Church Magazine, NSW&ACT) - 9 Feb 2024

<https://www.insights.uca.org.au/raising-of-tribal-voice-for-justice-conference-explores-fresh-perspectives/>

Eremos (Exploring Spirituality in Australia) - 9 Dec 2023

[https://www.eremos.org.au/index.cfm?module=news&pageMode=indiv&page\\_id=2213118](https://www.eremos.org.au/index.cfm?module=news&pageMode=indiv&page_id=2213118)

Eternity News - 13 October 2023

<https://www.eternitynews.com.au/australia/creating-a-new-narrative-for-our-nation/>

The Melbourne Anglican - 30 April 2023

<https://tma.melbourneanglican.org.au/2023/04/indigenous-theologians-set-to-challenge-churches-to-hard-conversations/>



# Logistics

## **Conference planning includes selecting and liaising with the following stakeholders and providers:**

- Keynote and panellist speakers and Church Respondents.
- First Nations Delegate applicants for support.
- Red Ochre sponsor: Wandiligong Indigenous Ministry Fund
- Yellow Ochre sponsor: Family of Dr Bruce Malcolm Schramm
- White Ochre sponsors:
  - The Salvation Army
  - Uniting Church in Australia (United Church in Australia National Assembly, Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, and Synod of NSW/ ACT)
  - Anglican Church of Australia (General Synod of the Anglican Church of Australia and The Corporation of the Synod of the Diocese of Brisbane)
  - Global Mission Partners (Indigenous Ministries in Australia)
  - National Council of Churches in Australia
  - Patrick and Anthony Wright Formation and Education Fund
  - Catholic Church of Australia
- Major donors including:
  - The Quakers
  - Trinity Worshipping Community of Uniting Church in the City
- Ticketing platform (Trybooking)
- Logo Artist (David Pearce)
- Graphic Designers (Annette Deal from Ginger Blue Graphics and Rebecca Kocass from Studio Troppo)
- Printers (Snap Underwood, Snap Print Solutions Box Hill)
- Marketing Coordinator (Tarnya Sim from Media Gem)
- Digital Marketing Specialist (Matt Dokter from People Marketing)
- Conference Support Staff (Tony Duke and Alizon Wilson)
- PR Platform (Michelle Shea from Medianet)
- Catering providers (Jarrah Young and team from Hot Dish Pty Ltd)
- AV provider for livestream and post conference promotional video assets (James Carrett and Martyn Frost from The Rowdy Partner)
- Photographer (Chris Kapa from KAPA)
- Venue (Matthew Beckmann from the Friars of St Pascals Chapel, Shared Services staff from the University of Divinity and Rose Cincotta from Yarra Theological Union)
- Cleaners (Nathan Meldrum from Clean As You Go)
- Accommodation and transport for speakers and First Nations delegates supported by the School of Indigenous Studies to attend the conference:
  - Accommodation for 41 guests (Eva Burrows College, Quest Mont Albert, Quest Burwood East, and Box Hill Motel).
  - Transport (12 hire car/minivan, pre-scheduled taxi services).
- Florist (Misty Flora)
- Purchase of gifts
- Marquee and chairs hire (Hine Events)

## **Customer Facing Documentation Developed:**

- Conference webpage (online)
- Conference Program (online and print)
- Conference Map
- Conference Signage Posters
- Media Consent Form (online and print)
- Delegate Registration Register
- Conference Feedback Form
- Individual (double-sided) Conference Name Tags with Discussion Group allocation
- School of Indigenous Studies History Booklet
- First Nations Support Application Form (online)
- Social media tiles for distribution on Facebook, X (Twitter), and Linked In
- Social media posts for distribution on Facebook, X (Twitter), and Linked In
- Terms and Conditions for Trybooking conference platform
- Ticket purchase letter for Trybooking conference platform

## **Compliance**

### **Sponsorship Compliance**

For the sponsorship program, we developed a first draft, quality assurance review by the Head of the School of Indigenous Studies and / or Business Development Manager prior to submission to the Operations Manager for posting on the University of Divinity social media accounts. This process was established to ensure all sponsor logos were included in or accessible by link to the posts.

### **Workplace health and safety**

Covid-19 precautions: A multifaceted approach to prevention of Covid 19 infection includes:

- The School of Indigenous Studies team distributed additional hand sanitiser, face masks at key locations at the venue prior to conference commencement and monitored use to ensure stock remained available to delegates for use.
- Additional cleaning in the venue bathrooms (wipe downs of the taps and handles) by the School of Indigenous Studies team between conference breaks increased hygiene.
- Additional daily deep cleans of the venue was obtained from Clean As You Go.
- Additional seating and a marquee ensured delegates had large open spaces preventing crowding, thereby reducing risk of contamination.
- Livestream access was provided to delegates who identified they were experiencing flu symptoms which prevented delegates remaining on site.

### **General WH&S**

- One Conference Support Staff contracted for the event held First Aid qualifications and the Operations Manager alerted other University staff on site with the qualifications of the upcoming event also in preparation.
- Seating capacity was checked prior to ticket numbers being capped to ensure sufficient seating and prevention of crowding.
- Accessible entrances were opened for the duration of the event.
- A quiet room was secured to provide a calm space for any delegates feeling overwhelmed or over-stimulated.
- A School of Indigenous Studies staff member remained present at the Reception Desk to provide a constant point of contact for delegates.

## Conference Impact

This is the first time in history a conference has drawn together Indigenous theologians from across Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific as well as church respondents from Christian denominations to raise up the Indigenous theological perspective and have the churches respond to their call to action. Delegates were treated to a diverse discourse from the keynote and panellist speakers, challenged by at times confronting content and inspired by the unique First Nations theological perspective.

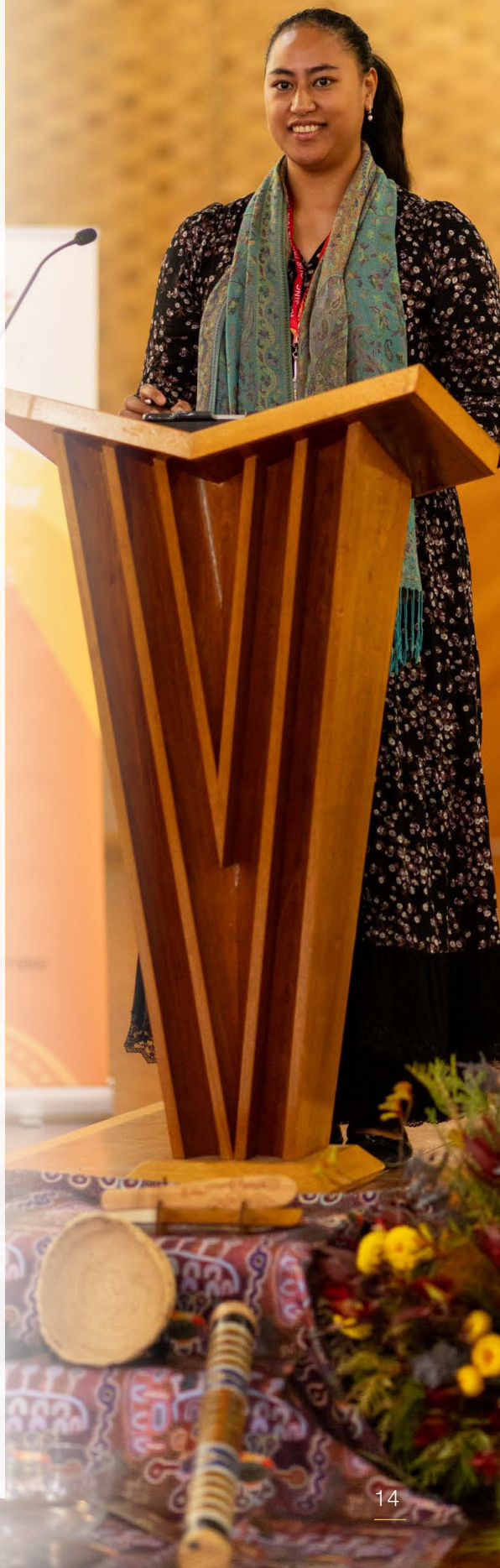
The collation of papers and book publication that will arise from the conference, will deliver a legacy to this conference. It will mark the beginning of the Indigenous theological revolution.

With 94.8% of in person delegates nominating they were very satisfied or satisfied with their overall conference experience, this measure demonstrates a high positive impact. In addition, delegates are self-reporting that they have initiated conversations inspired by the conference in their congregations and groups. A specific example is Eremos who have established a 3-part series of discussions on Indigenous theology incorporating speakers Professor Dr Anne Pattel-Gray and Rev Dr Canon Garry Deverell titled "[Listening to Country: An Indigenous Theology and Spirituality series](#)". Events - [Listening to Country: An Indigenous Theology and Spirituality Series, Session 1 \(eremos.org.au\)](#). This series commences 21 April 2024 and concludes on 8 September 2024.

The conference social media campaign raised the profile of the School of Indigenous Studies and the University of Divinity. The high-level professionalism of the conference has established the School's position as a cutting edge and effective school and credible tertiary institution, which will assist in research partnership negotiations and funding applications.

Other impacts are strategic networking and relationship building facilitated through the conference. Professor Dr Anne Pattel-Gray has already received expressions of interest from national and international representatives of churches and groups to work together on research projects, building faculty in the School of Indigenous Studies and provide general funding. These leads are in the process of being followed up.

The conference generated significant interest from stakeholders beyond the University of Divinity. Not only did delegates from various organisations attend, but many of these participating entities also provided reports on the conference's proceedings and outcomes. Religions for Peace Australia went a step further by publishing a comprehensive report about the conference on their website providing a comprehensive summary of the church leaders responses.



Below, we are adding a section of that report, with the consent of the author of the report.

## **RESPONSES BY CHURCH LEADERS<sup>1</sup>**

On the fourth day of the conference, the leaders of the nation's churches or their representatives were invited to respond to what they had heard.

### **Lt. Colonel Greg Morgan**

#### **Salvation Army**

The Salvation Army was one of the sponsors of the Conference. He acknowledged the land of the Wurundjeri people. He said it was a privilege to listen and learn so "I come humbly". There is deep work still to be done. There is an indigenous advisory council and also an indigenous ministry unit and a Territorian reconciliation unit. The priorities are:

1. Truth telling to hear the stories,
2. Social justice and advocacy,
3. Commitment to cultural immersion experiences, including for trainees,
4. Returning artefacts and
5. Engaging in how to respond to requests.

It has been transformative, but we are on a journey.

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### **Rev. John Gilmore President,**

#### **National Council of Churches of Australia**

I live in Naarm (Melbourne). The National Council of Churches of Australia accepts the special place of Aborigines and how they have suffered intergenerational trauma. As it says in the Book of Job, I want to sit up and listen. He recalled the dispute in the early Church about whether non-Jewish Christians should be circumcised or not as paralleling the direction that must be taken in theology.

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### **Rev. Sharon Hollis, President,**

#### **Uniting Church of Australia**

The Uniting Church had been a sponsor of the conference. We must own the history for it is our sin. It is our desire to lament and do more; we have not honoured our covenant; we are not an honourable partner. We are the second peoples, and we need to speak and speak of our racism. And accept the European voraciousness to take and to dominate. I want every member of the Uniting Church to be accountable. Do not let us off the hook. Rev. Hollis made every Uniting Church member in the audience stand and own the process.

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### **Bishop Keith Joseph**

#### **Anglican Bishop of North Queensland**

Before his appointment to North Queensland Bishop Keith had worked in the Solomon Islands. He has 20 priests in his diocese of whom 9 are indigenous. His diocese has autonomous indigenous councils. But its biggest problem is lack of money and the bishop gets no help from any other diocese.

He spoke of Australia's 23 Anglican dioceses each of which is independent. We now have an Aboriginal bishop. The history has been sour. He especially implored clergy to come north to the Torres Strait Islands, and there was a need to interact more with the Melanesian peoples.

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<sup>1</sup>This segment has been included from the Religions for Peace Australia report entitled "Conference Report: Raising our Tribal Voice for Justice – An Indigenous Theological Revolution," authored by Desmond Cahill, President of Religions for Peace Australia, and published on the Religions for Peace Australia website (<https://religionsforpeaceaustralia.org.au/?p=18495>) on April 8, 2024. The author of the report has provided formal consent for the inclusion of this section in our report.

**Bishop Charles Gauci**  
**Catholic Bishop of Darwin**

Bishop Gauci was scheduled to speak but sent a note saying he had too many pastoral engagements. He chairs the relevant bishops' commission. He sent along Fr. Don Benedetti, a Missionary of God's Love and a prison chaplain in the Northern Territory. He is in charge of St. Martin de Porres Church in Darwin which was given to the local indigenous community following Pope John Paul's visit to Alice Springs in 1986. Fr. Benedetti was accompanied by Dean Chisholm, an indigenous seminarian, who is due to be ordained this year.

The 1986 speech of Pope John Paul II was recalled calling for justice, and NATSICC was initiated in 1989 to advise the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference. On the question of a treaty, he wants his people to advise him.

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**Rev. Rob Knighthouse, representative**  
**Churches of Christ**

He said that the Church's indigenous unit continues to wrestle with the issues, and indigenous churches had been formed. The aim was to build a healthier future..

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**Jane Hope**  
**Anglican Bishop of North Queensland**

She is currently doing a Masters Course in Spiritual Direction. She began by mentioning that her own family had arrived in 1841. She acknowledged the lie of terra nullius, the land theft and all the other lies. She gave a short history of how the Society of Friends began in the UK. She said that indigenous theology is transformative and emphasised the importance of truth acceptance.

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**Rev. Dr. Peter Crutchly,**  
**Director of the Council of World Mission and Evangelism,**  
**World Council of Churches**

Peter Crutchley had previously worked for the London Missionary Society. 'I speak from the midst of the colonial missionary project'. He quoted Luke 18: 1-8 the parable of the auntie and the judge. We need to lay down our sinfulness. The British Empire says it is not enough. White regret is not enough IT IS NOT ENOUGH. Whiteness is a cannibal, devouring the land, the people, the money. Aborigines do not feel safe in white churches. A new world is badly needed. Anne Pattel-Gray is a member of our Council.

The session was rounded off by Professor Gabielle McMillan, the Deputy Chancellor of the University of Divinity, who said that the Conference had vindicated the Council's decision to establish a School of Indigenous Studies and thanked all participants.

The final word of the conference came from Professor Anne Pattel-Gray. She strongly stated that she wants to see the churches driving the agenda for a treaty and we have to hold the churches accountable. We are all called to be prophetic. It is your sin, the sin of white Christians, that we carry. We are so beaten by oppression. We have buried too many of our peoples before their time. You are locking up our children. Do not be silent anymore. The media won't listen to us but they may listen to you. Use God's power to bring a treaty, to act justly, we want to be able to flourish and thrive. You have too many assets and too much land. Let us be open to God in this conversation. Let it be the beginning of our future. We do not want to remain in the margins. Open the doors and let us in. And we are still hurting from the referendum.



## Conclusion

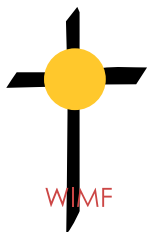
This conference marks the first time in history that Indigenous theologians from Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific were brought together to engage in theological discourse. This proved to have a significant and positive impact upon Indigenous and non-Indigenous delegates, highlighting the need for this conversation.

The highly positive delegate feedback and ripple effect of the conference sparking conversations nationally and internationally, demonstrates the necessity for future conferences and the potential for the development of an authentic relationship between Indigenous Christians and the churches founded on truth telling, justice, reparations and reconciliation.

The mechanics utilised in conference preparations have demonstrated success in facilitating a professional Indigenous conference. The analysis of social media and PR /Media channels underscores the success of the marketing strategy for the "Raising Our Tribal Voice for Justice" conference.

The insights gained will not only support future funding applications but will also serve as valuable evidence to attract sponsors for future conferences.

By building on the foundational marketing strategy from the inaugural conference, the University of Divinity School of Indigenous Studies is poised to further enhance its marketing effectiveness and outreach, setting the stage for continued growth and success in future endeavours.



Wandiligong  
Indigenous Ministry  
Fund

Donation from the family of  
Dr Bruce Malcolm Schramm (1937-2022)



The  
Salvation Army



Uniting Church  
in Australia



National Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander Anglican Council  
(NATSIAC)



National Council of  
Churches in Australia



Indigenous Ministries  
Australia

