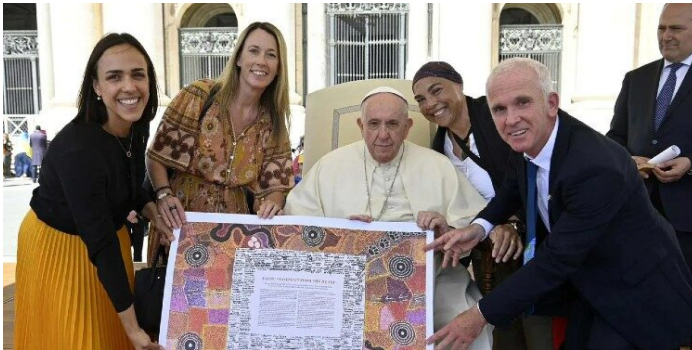


Francis accepts copy of Uluru Statement

Staff writers, *The Catholic Leader*, 30 May 2022



Pope Francis is presented with a copy of the Uluru Statement in St Peter's Square by (from left) Australian Ambassador to the Holy See Chiara Porro, Jacqui Remond, Theresa Ardler, and Professor Dermot Nestor. Photo: Vatican Media

Pope Francis has received a copy of the Uluru Statement from the Heart in St Peter's Square, Rome.

He accepted the gift in Rome, offering the endorsement of a photograph with the document after a briefing from aides and a meeting with Gweagal woman Theresa Ardler who presented a copy of the Uluru statement to the Pope during a 15-minute meeting last Wednesday, ahead of Reconciliation Week.

Last week Prime Minister Anthony Albanese committed to a referendum on the Uluru Statement, and leaders from nine faiths, including the Catholic Church, formally endorsed the statement, that calls for a “voice” — a representative body that can help shape policy directed at First Nations people — to be enshrined in Australia's constitution.



Representatives from nine faiths gathered at Sydney's Barangaroo last week and signed a statement in support of a voice for Indigenous Australia.

Australia's ambassador to the Holy See, Chiara Porro arranged for Ms Ardler, a Catholic and a campaigner for a constitutionally enshrined Indigenous voice, to meet the pontiff and attended as an interpreter. At the end of the meeting, the Pope held the Uluru statement for a group photo.

Ms Ardler, whose traditional lands include Botany Bay, was in Italy to speak at an event at Australian Catholic University's Rome campus.

About 250 Indigenous delegates from across Australia released the statement on May 26, 2017, after gathering at Uluru as community representatives.

Delegates read out what their community had asked for, then the joint statement was refined over three days.

Last September, Brisbane Archbishop Mark Coleridge publicly endorsed the Uluru Statement – an historic commitment by the Catholic Church to back indigenous leaders from across Australia demanding a constitutional voice.



Indigenous voice: Brisbane Archbishop Mark Coleridge has supported the Uluru Statement From the Heart on behalf of Catholics. Photo: Mark Bowling

The Coalition never committed to constitutional enshrinement under former prime minister Scott Morrison, however his government oversaw substantial work to design what the voice would look like.

A final report accepted by the government recommended an Indigenous voice to both government and parliament that would provide non-binding advice with no power of veto.