

SECTION 4: Taking Action for Truth-Telling

Mornington Peninsula Shire Reconciliation Policy and Action Plan (2020-22) emphasises the importance of Truth-Telling and deep listening. ‘Truth-Telling’ is one of the three pillars of the 2017 Uluru Statement of the Heart in which First Nations people set out the path forward. Following SWAN’s NAIDOC Week presentation by Wiradjuri and Wailwan woman Teela Reid, the SWAN Committee agreed to support a series of Truth-Telling activities amongst its members during 2021. *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* (2017) invites us to ‘walk with’ First Nations people in a movement to bring about justice and change. We hope what we write about will inspire SWAN members to be part of the change. Many non-Indigenous allies and supporters of justice for First Nations also demand action now. In addition, Truth-Telling is critical if non-Indigenous Australians are to respond to a constitutional reform referendum in an informed way. The following are examples from SWAN members’ experiences of taking action for Truth-Telling.

Family:

**It was my birthday and I asked that instead of presents, family members donate to Willum Warrain Aboriginal Association Gathering Place.*

**I gave the grandkids books by Indigenous authors for Christmas.*

Friends:

**A friend has just organised to take a group of friends to an Indigenous Art exhibition in the Yarra Valley. A good strategy for cultural awareness.*

**I asked friends to also send copies of a protest letter I wrote about the government’s failure to adopt the (Uluru) Statement from the Heart.*

Neighbours:

**My neighbour was adamant that the frontier wars saw more white settlers killed than First Peoples, so I researched it. Turns out that it was the other way around with researchers putting it at 20,000 Aboriginal people vs 2,000 (sic) whites. (NB: A recently published work updates 20,000 to 100,000 First Nations people killed – see Reynolds, 2021, p.191)*

Book Clubs:

**One of the members, when we read Tony Birch’s book ‘The White Girl’ was so upset. She said she really had no idea. I think we underestimate the degree of ignorance out there.*

Businesses:

**I have informed Origin that I am transferring to another energy provider in protest at the fracking on Traditional Lands and I am telling others about it.*

Superannuation Funds:

**I asked my super fund to withdraw from investment in Rio Tinto when they destroyed the Juukan Caves. And I was successful.*

Your Community:

**I live in a retirement village run by Australian Unity. I know they have a Reconciliation Action Plan so after I heard it mentioned about cultural recognition plaques at a SWAN meeting, I complained to Australian Unity that we have no plaque. Now, apparently in March 2021, all Australian Unity properties will have either plaques or the flags erected. This will be a chance to get conversation going.*

**I went to the Tourist Information Centre and asked if they had any leaflets on Indigenous cultural heritage. None! Nothing! Another centre had a couple of Baluk Arts (Mornington) leaflets, that's all but better than nothing. I asked them to follow this up with their management.*

Your Church:

**My friend is part of the Mt. Eliza Village Church which has a working group on First Nations matters. They were part of organising a Mourning Event at Mother's Beach that incorporated Traditional Owners and focused on passing on the truth about 'Australia Day', that it was an invasion they mourn, not a celebration.*

Education:

**I know a lot of schools do more than in the past but I am wondering about (the Peninsula's) U3A. They could have courses in Indigenous Studies like the one at Hawthorn did to educate older people about the true history as many weren't taught this at school.*

Social Media:

**I was so upset when I saw what some trolls were saying to council when all (Mornington Peninsula) Council were doing was trying to respect the fact that the swimming pool should have an Indigenous name, so I did reply 'we are on First People's land'.*

Allies:

**Our group is concerned with environment issues, so we have learned about Aboriginal cultural practices, how the land was cared for by them in the past until colonialism came along.*

RESOURCES / SUGGESTED WEBSITES & MAILING LISTS TO JOIN

- *Mornington Peninsula Shire Reconciliation Policy and Action Plan (2020-22), Deb Mellett, Mornington Peninsula Shire Council, VIC.*
- *Nairn Marr Djambana Aboriginal Association Gathering Place, Frankston, VIC., <https://www.djambana.org.au>*
- *Pay The Rent campaign, <https://paytherent.net.au>*
- *Reconciliation Victoria, <http://www.reconciliationvic.org.au>*
- *Reynolds, H. 2021, *Truth-Telling: History, Sovereignty and the Uluru Statement*, NewSouth Publishing, Sydney, NSW.*
- *SWAN Supporting First Nations Group via swanwomen@outlook.com*
- *The Uluru Statement from the Heart, 2017, National Constitutional Convention, Uluru, online: <https://ulurustatement.org>*
- *Willum Murrain Aboriginal Association Gathering Place, Hastings, VIC., <https://www.willumwarrain.org.au>*
- *Yoo-rrook Justice Commission websites:*
 - <https://www.firstpeoplesvic.org/committees/truth-telling/truth-telling-faqs/>
 - <https://www.aboriginalvictoria.vic.gov.au/truth-and-justice>

If you have any questions or helpful ideas, please contact **SWAN Supporting First Nations Group** via swanwomen@outlook.com. Your feedback and input is welcomed and encouraged.