

Dennis Jetta's Reply to Bishop Ian's Apology



Thank you very much.

We are all Noongars. We run from Dongara down to Southern Cross and to between Esperance and Albany, one of the biggest Aboriginal groups in Australia.

I would like to reply to the Bishop in this way.

I feel privileged to stand here today and as I am looking out over this country, it is saying to me that our Noongar language and people are finally beginning to be recognised as being a vital part of our community today.

The theme for this year's NAIDOC week (2023) is *For Our Elders*. Our Elders are making a challenge to all Australians – individuals, families, communities, organisations and government – to be brave and tackle the unfinished business of reconciliation, so we can make change for the benefit of all Australians.

That is why I called out to mainstream Australia and Australian governments and the people of governments to contribute to a greater healing of our societies today, by owning the wrong doings of the past, and claiming the true history of Australia – warts and all.

However, we cannot do it alone. Collectively as one united Australia, as one united people – despite religious differences, despite cultural differences, despite racial differences – we can do it together. We can change our communities in our country, in our regions – it's both locally and nationally. And most importantly, we can demonstrate to the world that we are a great nation of people, with a culture that demands a common component of mankind, which is the ability to love, trust and respect.

We are to stand united. I want to encourage all people today to be like the tree standing in the middle of a bushfire, the leaves are scorched and the tough bark is scarred and burnt, but inside the tree the sap is still flowing, and under the ground the roots are still strong.

So like that tree, we have endured the flames. We still have the power to be reborn, and here I call upon all of us to march together to allow that tree to become green again, and to have fruit and prosper, as we cannot do it ourselves.

We also need to have faith in the future generations of our people and future governments to do the right thing, and carry out the correct steps to assist us in retaining our dignity as Australian people and also to have faith in the many caring Australian people who wish to see justice, care and compassion finally rewarded to the original caretakers of this great country of ours.

A common supremacy exists in our daily lives. It is not black, it's not white, it is not one religion over another. If we can *allow the power of love to defeat the love of power*, this world would be a better place to live in.