



# YOUTH ACTIVITIES

By National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council  
and Dr Rebekah Pryor, Caritas Australia



## The Voice and other steps on the reconciliation journey

The 2023 theme for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Sunday is 'A New Life in Christ'. It relates to the transformative possibilities that come when we walk God's way of love. At this time in Australia's reconciliation journey, we see signs of new life – the Uluru Statement's invitation to walk together "for a better future" is being taken up and its call to join in listening, truth-telling and agreement making is growing louder.

When we encourage young people to join us on the journey, we do so knowing that they bring unique perspectives, ideas and energy that will benefit us all, now and for future generations. The activities that follow aim to celebrate and make space for their insights as they learn about the Voice to Parliament referendum and other steps on Australia's reconciliation journey.

Learning to listen to First Nations people tell their stories is important to understanding the truth about their lives, histories and hopes for the future. While there are common themes,

particularly concerning the injustices First Nations Peoples have faced and continue to face, their stories are as unique as their languages and cultures. So, as you lead these youth activities, be encouraged to draw in First Nations stories shared by local Traditional Custodian groups or other accounts from reliable sources.

## Learning Objectives

The specific objective is to help youth learn about the Voice to Parliament referendum and its potential impact, as well as other steps that promote and enable reconciliation.

The activities described below are designed for use with young people in school, parish and other group settings. They link to the Australian Curriculum, particularly the cross-curriculum priority of [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures](#) and the general capabilities of [Critical and Creative Thinking](#), [Ethical Understanding](#), [Intercultural Understanding](#) and [Personal and Social Capability](#). They also incorporate Catholic Social Teachings (CSTs) on justice and political participation, particularly the principle of Subsidiarity.

## Setting the Space

Create a sacred space that provides a focus for learning and contemplation. Incorporate visual and liturgical elements that will help young people make connections with ideas like spirituality, faith, culture, community and ecology. Taking inspiration from the theme, 'A New Life in Christ', include candles, water, gum leaves, rocks, branches or bark as well as First Nations artwork and music.

## Activity Materials

- Resources on the Voice to Parliament referendum, such as news articles, official government documents and opinion pieces
- Papal encyclicals that address the importance of political engagement and the principle of subsidiarity, such as Pope Francis's *Laudato Si'* and Pope Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate*
- Writing materials
- A3 poster paper and poster making supplies for everyone in the group (e.g. paint, markers, an assortment of coloured papers and glue suitable for collage, etc.)

## Activity 1: *Listen up!* Meditation

Invite young people to practise the skill of listening by leading them through this quiet meditation.

Listening is a key part of how we learn and share meaning, understanding and wisdom. In Australia, on our journey of reconciliation, listening to First Nations Peoples' voices and stories is especially important. Listening is something we can practise, including through quiet contemplation and meditation.

Sit comfortably. Gently close your eyes.

Notice your breath.

Listen to the sound of air flowing in and out.

Listen.

Can you hear the breath of others in the room?

Notice what else you can hear.

Take a deep breath in. And out.

Now, listen to these words about *dadirri* (deep listening)

from Dr Miriam Rose Ungunmerr Baumann:

To know me is to breathe with me.

To breathe with me is to listen deeply.

To listen deeply is to connect.\*

After a minute or two, finish with another deep breath in and out, then gently open your eyes.

\*Source: Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr, ["Dadirri" \(Official Miriam-Rose Ungunmerr Video\)](#)

## Activity 2: Research and Reflection

Introduce students to [the Voice to Parliament referendum](#). Also, deepen their understanding of Catholic Social Teachings on justice and political participation, particularly the principle of Subsidiarity, with [Caritas Australia's CST Toolkit](#).

Have students research and gather information about the referendum and its potential outcomes and impacts. After a time, use a whiteboard, Google Doc or an app like [www.mentimeter.com](http://www.mentimeter.com) to collate and record the group's findings. Next, invite students to reflect on how their Catholic faith shapes their views on the referendum, particularly in light of the principle of Subsidiarity. Have each student write a poem or one-page reflection paper on the topic. Alternatively, if time and facilities allow, they could create a minute-long short film or 5-slide presentation on the topic. Encourage them to keep the CST of Subsidiarity front-of-mind as they complete the activity.

Once these reflections are complete, invite students to share their reflections and learn from one another.

## Activity 3: Debate

Introduce students to [the Voice to Parliament referendum](#) and its potential outcomes and impacts. (Use and build on any learning generated from the previous activity, if done.) Divide students into two or more teams to simulate a debate on the referendum. Assign each team a different position, such as arguing in favour of the amendments proposed by the referendum or against it. As they develop arguments in support of their assigned position, encourage students to read the referendum question and proposed change to the

constitution closely.

Hold the debate by getting students to take turns presenting their arguments and responding to their opponents' arguments. Set a time limit of, say, 3 or 5 minutes for each speaker. Remind students of the Catholic Social Teaching principle of Subsidiarity throughout the debate.

After the debate, facilitate a group discussion encouraging students to reflect on the arguments of both sides and consider how their participation in the political process aligns with their Catholic faith and values.

## Activity 4: *Imagine an Australia where... Poster*

Artist and social justice advocate Corita Kent used words to great effect. As a religious sister in the Immaculate Heart of Mary order, she lived by the Catholic Social Teachings of her tradition. As an artist practising in the 1960s, she was also inspired by Pop Art, especially the way it used images of everyday objects and borrowed the visual language of advertising. And so, for more than two decades up until the time of her death in 1986, she made bold artwork that incorporated text, pattern and colour to inspire and challenge leaders and others to address poverty, racism and other social injustices. As a group, view examples on [Corita Kent's website](#).

Following Corita Kent's method of using text, pattern and colour to express an important social justice message, have students create an A3 poster that communicates how meeting the *Closing the Gap* targets will positively impact the lives of First Nations Australians.

After exploring the [Closing the Gap targets](#) designed to positively impact the lives of First Nations Australians, have students choose one target, for example, Target 1: “Everyone enjoys long and healthy lives.”

Have each student design a poster that includes the phrase ‘Imagine an Australia where...’ along with the words of the *Closing the Gap* target they selected, for example: ‘Imagine an Australia where everyone enjoys long and healthy lives.’ They may also include statistics about the target from the [Closing the Gap website](#) and/or quotes by First Nations leaders and others whose words express something relevant to the target.

Make an exhibition or display of the students’ posters to share with others in your community. You could even use the exhibition space as a setting for community conversations or other reconciliation-focused events.

## **Activity 5: Community Action**

Remind students of the Catholic Social Teaching principle of Subsidiarity, which emphasises the importance of decision-making at the local level. Brainstorm community actions that are grounded in this principle, such as advocating for greater representation for their local community in the political process. Facilitate a discussion that encourages students to share and reflect on their experiences of taking action. Ask: How did it feel? What difference did it make? Encourage them to consider how their Catholic faith inspires and challenges them to be active and engaged citizens. Also encourage them

to learn about the social justice issues and challenges faced by First Nations people and others in their particular area, and ask: ‘How might I act in solidarity with my neighbours?’