

ILC Inspired Faith Action Towards COP26

27 September 2021

Brooke Prentis

Wakka Wakka nation, Aboriginal Christian Leader, CEO of Common Grace

QUESTION: From your perspective as an Australian Aboriginal Christian leader, how do you engage with COP26 and how to make sure this COP26 is going to create inclusive results and real impact for transformation?

RESPONSE from Brooke Prentis:

Firstly, thank you for having me as part of this important dialogue and for amplifying the voice and leadership of an Indigenous person from these lands now called Australia. The Indigenous peoples of Australia, are the Aboriginal peoples comprising over 300 nations covering the entire land and water mass of these lands now called Australia, and the Torres Strait Islander peoples from over 20 islands in the Torres Strait, the body of water between the tip of Queensland Australia and Papua New Guinea.

As Aboriginal peoples we were placed here by the Creator since time immemorial, since the beginning of time, and according to science over 65,000 years. Creator created the boundaries of our nations and these boundaries are embedded in the landscape – mountain ranges, water ways, tree lines.

Creator gave us the law – who the Creator is, how to care for creation, and how to live in right relationship. Most Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia identify as Christian and we see these laws reflected in the Bible and especially Jesus call to love our neighbour. Aboriginal peoples, refer to creation as Country. Country is all lands, waters, sky, trees, plants, animals, birds, fish, rocks, mountains, and all peoples.

I say, post-colonial is only an academic aspiration, and not a lived reality, as over the last 250 years of colonisation in Australia, which continues today, we have suffered and suffer many injustices.

Australia breaks the UN declaration on the rights of Indigenous peoples every day and in particular to the notion of free, prior and informed consent.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities in Australia are impacted today by creation and climate injustice by climate change. In the Torres Strait Islands, the sea waters have been rising and inundating homes

and sites of spiritual significance for over a decade. Aboriginal peoples in the centre of Australia, the desert regions, it is now almost too hot to perform ceremonies that have been performed continuously for tens of thousands of years. The Australian bushfires or wildfires of 2019 and 2020 saw sacred sites, over 65,000 years old, incinerated such was the intensity of the heat and flame.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, knowledge, and participation is often ignored, and disregarded by all levels of Australian governments in all areas, including for climate change and for the environment, you will rarely even hear us spoken about. I am sure any COP26 discussions about Australia or COP26 discussions from the Australian Prime Minister or Australian delegates will not mention Aboriginal peoples, or Torres Strait Islander peoples.

One place that does not disregard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership, and indeed values and is led by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Christian Leaders is the movement of Common Grace. A movement pursuing Jesus and Justice. You can follow Common Grace by signing up on our website www.commongrace.org.au or following us on social media @commongraceaus

One of the ways the Common Grace movement has recently taken climate action is through our Knit for Climate Action initiative.

This is one of the scarves knitted through Common Grace's knit for climate action that I am wearing today and you can see it goes from blue to red. I describe it as hauntingly beautiful – visually representing the last 100 years of the average global temperatures – our warming world.

Common Grace's Knit for Climate Action and leading the Australian expression of Show Your Stripes Day, 21 June, which is winter solstice in Australia, will be a multi-year campaign, but we have specific actions and focus for major impact and lending support to COP26.

The last joint sitting day of the Australian Parliament before COP26, is October 21st. Before October 21st, Common Grace, will have delivered a personally hand-knitted, climate scarf to every Australian Federal parliamentarian, all 227 of them. The scarf is accompanied by policy asks aligned with the Paris Agreement ambitions, and the core steps being asked for by COP 26. In addition, dozens of meetings are being held with parliamentarians by Common

Grace supporters, presenting the scarf, our policy asks, and expressing the urgency of ambitious climate action in Australia.

We will ask them to wear the scarf on October 21st and post on social media using the official hashtags of COP26 – #COP26 and #togetherforourplanet.

This will include Common Grace's own social media engagement about our desired asks and the campaign, including the significance of COP26, and what we're hoping for.

Our asks to Australian Federal Parliamentarians include to listen to and be led by those most impacted by our warming world in our region, Aboriginal peoples, Torres Strait Islander peoples, and Australia's neighbours, peoples of the Pacific Island nations.

Let us remember that by referring to all the nations in the Pacific as Pacific Islanders we reduce their status as peoples, their nationhood, and the diversity of cultures, and the scale of the impacts of climate change.

Now is the time we must listen to the ancient and living voices and leadership of Indigenous peoples from these lands now called Australia, and from around the world.

My hope and prayer is that the International Interfaith movement, will hear, will listen, and will be led by Indigenous peoples. And with that support, the world's leaders will hear, listen, and be led by Indigenous peoples. And together we will protect and restore our Common Home, God's Beautiful Earth, Country.

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For more information on Common Grace's Knit for Climate Action

For more information on the Knit for Climate Action scarves and the pattern -
https://www.commongrace.org.au/knit_for_climate_action

To go straight to getting the pattern, register here and you will be sent the pattern.
https://www.commongrace.org.au/how_to_knit_for_climate_action

We would be happy to help any other nation to link in with Common Grace with the knit for climate action and inspire your own nation's leaders. We found the global data is the best to go with showing the links to us as the world. If you are interested in learning from and working with us, please contact brooke@commongrace.org.au and jane@commongrace.org.au, Jane Kelly is Common Grace's Creation and Climate Justice Coordinator.