



CLAIMING *the*
COMMON GROUND
for RECOGNITION

Achieving a symbolic moment that
makes a real difference by addressing
fair and reasonable concerns

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Uphold & Recognise

27 May 2017



Mud in your toes

I know Merewether Beach is absolutely beautiful, but although I lived in Newcastle for sixteen years I probably only went to the beach five times. I'm a muddy-water person: I like to feel the mud in my toes and not the sand. I grew up on the Barwon River out on the Old Brewarrina Mission. I'm just not connected to the ocean.

Connections matter in life, and Brewarrina connects me with some of the most painful aspects of Aboriginal life, and some of its most inspiring aspects. I lived in Brewarrina up until the age of 20. It's a pretty good little town. It's full of good people. It's had some tough breaks. If you look at where Brewarrina is today, it's probably a very black and white community—bits of grey, but very black and white. Brewarrina's history's been hard. There was a lot of division between blacks and whites.

Brewarrina connects me with the black deaths in custody which are one of the darkest aspects of the Aboriginal community. In August 1987, Brewarrina erupted into a riot that was triggered by the death in police custody of Lloyd James Boney. On 10 August 1987, the Prime Minister, Bob Hawke, announced a Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

But Brewarrina also connects me to the fish traps known as Baiame's Ngunnhu, and which are believed to have been shared by the Ngemba, Barkindji Wangkumarra, Murrawari Weilwan and Gamilaroi people for thousands of years. They consist of river stones arranged to form small channels, which direct fish into small areas from which they are readily plucked. This complex net of linked weirs and ponds along 500 metres of the river provided an abundance of fish and made Brewarrina one of the great inter-tribal meeting places of pre-European eastern Australia. It remains a source of light for all of us.

These memories of growing up on the Old Brewarrina Mission underpin my commitment to constitutional recognition, economic empowerment, and cultural embrace of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

I am the product of five decades of political combat between the First Peoples of Australia and the Commonwealth of Australia, which, in turn, was built on the billions of tears that flowed from the diseased eyes of generations of First Peoples over the preceding 200 years. We all know that where we are today falls way short of where we need to be. We know that the terrible gap between the life outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians is completely unacceptable. We know that continuing to do what we have done to date is not going to get us anywhere. Nothing changes if nothing changes.

That is why I'm part of a movement committed to real change that will end this madness of doing the same thing and expecting different results. We can't do that. This is truly a life-and-death matter. My people are dying out there. Sorry business is business as usual in our communities. Those of us left behind are growing sadder with every passing. In this time of

crisis, we need to get very serious about solving the so-called "Indigenous problem". Things can get a lot worse from here, if we do not act quickly.

Yes, in many ways, things are getting better. Recently, Stan Grant pointed to the rapidly increasing Indigenous middle class. He pointed to the steadily rising ranks of Indigenous millionaires. So the lot of my people is improving. But as you move out from the urban centres, through the outlying suburbs, across the rural expanse and into the remote communities, the picture grows dark. There are many who still suffer. We all want this to change, and change quickly.

I believe that constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples has a role to play in making these changes happen. It has to contribute to such change, otherwise it is a hollow gesture and a waste of everyone's time. But it also has to be done in a way that upholds the integrity of the Australian Constitution. Whatever change needs to be made, it needs to be change that builds on the things that work about how Australia is governed, in order to improve the parts that are not working as well as they should be. Only a model that provides meaningful recognition and real change, but which also upholds the Constitution, can win a referendum.

Taking pride

In *The Minimal Monarchy*, Tony Abbott writes:

The street I live in is called Lady Davidson Circuit—because it runs along the edge of a large bushland park originally named after the wife of an imperial dignitary. A few years ago, the park was incorporated into a larger area with an Aboriginal name but the street name stayed the same. This is a homely example of cultural evolution writ small. As Australia's independent history lengthens, what is 'British' diminishes and what is 'Australian' increases. Yet over time, what was once 'British' becomes incorporated into what is now Australian.

Like all true conservatives, Tony has a great appreciation of the importance of where we live and grow up for our understanding of ourselves and our values. It's also telling that he's spent time in remote Indigenous communities, so that he can better understand what matters to them. He also reminds us that as our sense of an Australian national identity strengthens, our British and Aboriginal heritage becomes incorporated into our sense of Australia, along with our multicultural society.

Brewarrina's fish traps are a reminder that Australia is home to the world's oldest continuing *living culture*. To have the oldest of anything is a big thing. An ever-growing number of tourists seek out anything that can make such a claim. Before the horror of war in Syria, tourists flocked to Dura-Europos Church, the world's oldest church built around AD 235. St Peter's Basilica in Vatican City, built in AD 333, attracts millions of visitors every year. Remarkable

though these oldest places are, it is also remarkable that they were built thousands of years after the First Australians crossed the land bridge and settled in our ancient continent and built the fish traps at Brewarrina that are still functional today.

Brewarrina's fish traps are part of our living culture. I stress *living culture*. Across Australia, the First Peoples are actively engaged in the cultural practices that they have been practising for millennia. They are still talking in ancient languages.

But our culture and languages are disappearing as we speak. Every year, we are losing the last speaker of another language. We are losing the old people who know the stories and ceremonies passed down over thousands of years. We must protect our ancient culture and languages as an intrinsic good for our country, but also for the economic benefits of tourism. We know that international visitors are seeking Indigenous experiences and that many Australians would love to make their own "first contact".

Apart from that, surely it is our most valuable right to live long and prosper on this earth, and to have our culture live on, be revitalized, and be shared with the rest of world. We must protect and energize our culture and languages because they are central to our personal well-being. Our ongoing connection to culture and languages is what has allowed us to survive, despite everything that has been thrown at us. It is our pride in our culture that has allowed any of us who have survived to overcome the inter-generational trauma embedded deep in our psyches.

Our Indigenous heritage is something uniquely Australian. Together with our British institutions and multicultural society, it is part of the national patrimony of all Australians, something in which we can all take pride. It will also be the thing that allows our Indigenous peoples to step up and take responsibility, to accept recognition, and overturn the dreadful misery besetting so many of our people.

Taking responsibility

We should never lose sight of our national aspirations, but in doing so, we also need to remain mindful of the painful memories of the past. Since colonisation, our First Peoples have been disempowered. For much of the time, we have been completely bereft of power. Our elders past, and some still present, lived under the complete control of governments, churches and, in many places, lawless mobs of white settlers.

In the 1970s, we saw the oppression begin to be replaced by what we might call the "rights agenda". Winning some rights was important, but it came with a rise in social dysfunction. To understand how that rolled out, I recommend Peter Sutton's book, *The Politics of Suffering*. It is a comprehensive, first-hand account of the unintended damage caused by the rights agenda, which has guided Indigenous policy across the last three decades. Sutton's book details how the

tunnel vision around rights robbed our people of the very thing we needed to be doing: taking responsibility. We were disempowered, robbed of the basic human right to chart our own course. As the saying goes, we ended up having things done to us, not with us, because the rights agenda did not encourage us to take responsibility.

One dreadful outcome of the rights agenda has been the "soft bigotry of low expectations." At the core of the endless failed policies and programs is low expectations. It is where compassion becomes our peoples' poison. It is where the good intentions of others become our prison, trapping us in poverty and despair. The constant effort to save us from our "problems" has created a narrative of low expectations that casts my people as perpetual victims with little personal agency to solve our problems by ourselves.

To address these low expectations, we need to raise the bar. We need to set our sights much higher. We need to move from rights to responsibility, as Noel Pearson argues. First Nations people and our communities need to be empowered to take responsibility for the policies and programs that are supposed to be helping us. Right now, we have little power to do this.

Alongside many Indigenous leaders across the country and top thinkers in the corporate world and public service, I was heavily involved with the development of the *Empowered Communities: Empowered Peoples Design Report*, released two years ago. It is a comprehensive plan for how governments can empower Indigenous communities.

There is nothing I want more than economic development for our people. I want them to enjoy the same opportunities as everybody else. But there needs to be structures in place for this to happen. In many cases we are doing everything we can to get ahead, but there are still many structural and social barriers to success.

I am the CEO of Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, one of the lucky Indigenous entities. We are well resourced and we receive little government funding. We are pursuing economic development in our region. There is no better feeling than driving into a Darkinjung-owned residential development site and seeing our contribution to the local economy. For every \$1 million we spend, we create ten jobs. Ten per cent of our development is retained by Darkinjung for affordable housing for our members at no cost to taxpayers.

I want to see more Indigenous communities achieving this kind of independence. For this to happen, communities need to be able to tell government how to get rid of the barriers to their development. If there is no structural interface to allow our people to communicate with government, then there is no way they can succeed.

Designed properly, an Indigenous advisory body could vastly improve the way we operate. Our small and under-resourced communities would not be so alone and isolated. They could have this national body, with local connections, taking their concerns and aspirations to Canberra. It could be a structure to empower Indigenous people to work together more effectively.

We all know that the nation faces the challenge of closing the gap between Indigenous Australians and non-Indigenous Australians. But the current debate goes on at such a high level. There is no structural connection between government and community. The question is: how do we empower communities to take ownership of solutions? The answer lies in a First Nations Voice to Parliament connecting the high-level political debates to the local knowledge of our people on the ground.

Finishing 1967's unfinished business

I ask myself, “How much has changed in Brewarrina since 1967?”

The 1967 referendum stands as the most successful ever. Considering that only 8 out of 44 referendums have been passed, the overwhelming ‘yes’ vote in 1967 was extraordinary with 90.77% support.

The general attitude in Indigenous Australia today towards the 1967 referendum is that it was a great moment and an important step away from the brutality and indifference that we have laboured under. But it was not the great turning point that some would have us believe it to have been. Let's face it, there is not much evidence that suggests the 1967 referendum really changed the lived experience of most First Nations people. If anything, things got worse. At the very least, the changes in 1967 left unfinished business. The referendum gave the Commonwealth a power to make laws about us, but it didn't give us a say in the exercise of that power. We still have no voice in the compact. They still haven't shared any power with us. And so we are still an incomplete Commonwealth. That is why constitutional recognition is important. As the birth certificate of our nation, the Constitution is largely silent on the original people of this continent. It does not afford the First Nations who lived and thrived on the continent for tens of thousands of years a fair place.

Of course it is inappropriate to retain racially discriminatory provisions. The races power should be changed to be called what it really is: an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander power. It is widely accepted that, although the Commonwealth Parliament needs to retain the power to make laws concerning Indigenous affairs, such as native title and heritage protection, it should no longer make laws that depend on the idea of “race”. We are not a “race”—we are the First Peoples. But we First Peoples should have a fair say in the exercise of Parliament's power with respect to our affairs.

Fifty years after 1967, my people in Brewarrina are having a bit more of a say. I was one of our mob to be invited to the Regional Dialogue that the Referendum Council held in Dubbo earlier this year, and I subsequently represented our mob at the national convention that the Referendum Council held at Uluru from 24 to 26 May, on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of 1967's unfinished business.

At the national convention we heard, for the first time in Australian history, a unified voice of not just the Brewarrina people, but all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. That voice, expressed in the Uluru Statement from the Heart called for a First Nations Voice to be enshrined within the Australian Constitution and for a Makarrata Commission to be established by the Australian Parliament. (Makarrata is Yolngu for ‘peace talks after hostilities’.) These are the means by which Indigenous peoples seek to have their ancient sovereignty recognised, and through which we can start to deal with this unfinished business begun in 1967.

Upholding the Constitution and recognising Indigenous peoples

There was an idea floating around before Uluru that recognising Indigenous people in the Constitution is a matter of inserting some poetry up the front of the Constitution, in the form of a preamble. Some flowery words about how we were here first.

After Uluru, I think I am on safe ground when I say that Indigenous people have completely rejected any proposal that reduces recognition to poetry in the Constitution. Indigenous people don't only reject it because it is simply not enough recognition, they reject it because it would not pass, or pass only after being edited into a completely meaningless statement.

The constitutional conservatives—the very people that can mount a successful “no” campaign—have made it patently clear that they will fight tooth and nail to ensure that there is not a single word in the preamble that could be used by “activist” High Court judges to usurp the power of the Parliament. So Indigenous people have rejected the “minimalist” model because they know it will end up being either worthless because it says too little to satisfy the First Peoples, or rejected by those who think it says too much, at least in the eyes of the constitutional conservatives who would then resist it at all costs.

While rejecting minimalism, what has emerged through the Regional Dialogues is a consensus amongst our First Peoples that they need a voice to Parliament. There is a long history of advocacy for such a voice. Noel Pearson picked up on this history in his Quarterly Essay, *A Rightful Place*, in which he suggested that the Constitution provide for an Indigenous advisory body. Professor Anne Twomey then drafted a clause that could be inserted into the Constitution to provide that the Parliament shall establish such a body, whose advice it shall consider when making laws with respect to Indigenous affairs.

More recently, Warren Mundine has offered his own spin on such a voice to Parliament. In his essay, *Practical Recognition from the Mobs' Perspective*, he writes that the Constitution needs to enable our mobs to speak for country. This, he believes, requires the establishment of local Indigenous bodies, rather than a national Indigenous body. Warren and Noel offer us two different ways of thinking about how an Indigenous voice to Parliament might be achieved.

Being voiceless is the epitome of disempowerment. Indigenous people have such little power to influence the policies and programs that are designed to benefit them, and they have so little power precisely because of the way they have been treated for the last 200 years. Indigenous Australians want full recognition, which includes recognition that the future must be different from the past. True constitutional recognition requires a sharing of power: it requires empowerment. The Constitution needs to provide some kind of guarantee that our First Peoples won't be disempowered in future.

For all the shortcomings that our Constitution currently has in the eyes of our First Peoples, we should not forget that, in many ways, the Australian Constitution provides us with a system of government that is the envy of the world, and this is something to be proud of. Sir Samuel Griffith, Sir Edmund Barton and their colleagues did something remarkable when they drafted the practical and pragmatic charter of government that is our Constitution. It is a rulebook that provides good rules for government.

But there is one respect in which they failed to make necessary rules. They didn't include any rules that empowered the First Peoples or ensured they were treated fairly. An Indigenous advisory body of the kind we discussed at Uluru could provide the necessary constitutional rules for Indigenous empowerment. As Julian Leeser MP has written, such a proposal "sits most comfortably with the nature of the Constitution. It is the kind of machinery clause that Griffith, Barton and their colleagues might have drafted, had they turned their minds to it."

It is an understatement to say that it is a pity that they did not turn their minds to it. But I agree with Julian that a machinery clause like this "can sensibly sit in the Constitution, where it can have its intended practical effect."

Although it is crucial that recognition of First Peoples brings with it empowerment, through a constitutionally guaranteed Indigenous voice to Parliament, I should say that I do not underestimate the power of poetry. Poetry alone cannot empower our First Peoples but poetry and symbolic statements are still important for our national life. Symbolic statements of recognition should happen outside the Constitution, where they can reduce the risk of unintended legal consequences.

If we can establish an Indigenous voice to Parliament in the Constitution, then I am also excited about the idea of an Australian Declaration of Recognition outside the Constitution. This would provide Australia with a powerful and poetic statement of all that matters about Australia—our Indigenous heritage, our British institutions and our multicultural achievement—as well as an opportunity to recognise those aspects of the past that will always be painful memories for our nation.

But perhaps more importantly, recognising these painful memories could provide the basis for our reciting in the Declaration of Recognition our aspirations for the kind of nation that we hope to become in the future. As the Referendum Council's Professor Megan Davis has written, the Declaration "approach is compelling... It would create a defining moment in a

way that a Commonwealth referendum cannot." The merits of this approach have also been grasped by non-Indigenous people, such as Australians for Constitutional Monarchy's National Convenor, Professor David Flint. He commended the approach in ACM's submission to Parliament's Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

In 2015, two lawyers and constitutional conservatives, Damien Freeman and Julian Leeser, established a new organisation called Uphold & Recognise. The organisation is committed to its Charter for Upholding the Australian Constitution and Recognising Indigenous Australians. Among other things, the Charter declares:

We are committed to working towards the following four priorities:

- Repealing section 25 of the Constitution;
- Repealing and replacing section 51(xxvi) of the Constitution so it reads: "The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws for the peace, order, and good government of the Commonwealth with respect to: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples";
- Adopting an extra-constitutional Declaration of Recognition;
- Ensuring the voice of Indigenous people is heard in the processes of Parliament.

We believe that such a range of measures would fairly recognise Australia's Indigenous peoples; help to enable better outcomes for them; and, at the same time, uphold the integrity of the Australian Constitution.

Signatories to Uphold & Recognise's Charter include Major General Peter Arnison, Dame Marie Bashir, Colin Carter, John Fahey, Nick Greiner, Dr Brendan Nelson, Malcolm Mackerras, Andrew Robb, and Sir David Smith.

On 17 May 2017, Uphold & Recognise organised a panel discussion at the Australian War Memorial in which a former governor-general, Major General Michael Jeffery, and a former defence force chief, Air Chief Marshal Sir Angus Houston, participated in a discussion about constitutional recognition with current and former Indigenous servicemen and women.

Stephen Fitzpatrick wrote in *The Australian*:

They are the most senior establishment figures yet to acknowledge the mood at indigenous consultations nationwide against minimalism, which is said to be preferred by politicians, calling instead for "a full and dignified reconciliation" and "tangible, positive results" from the outcome... The intervention by Sir Angus and General Jeffery ... could be pivotal in building support among conservatives for a more far-reaching referendum question.

"I strongly support establishing an indigenous body to advise the parliament on indigenous matters," Sir Angus said. "It is vital that the voices and opinions of indigenous Australians

are heard in the processes of parliament.” This, and the declaration of recognition, he said, “would deliver tangible, positive results for indigenous Australians and allow the nation to move forward in a spirit of reconciliation and unity”.

General Jeffery said Corporal Richard “Dickie” Bligh was “one of my best junior battlefield leaders in Vietnam” and a friend to this day. “In the trauma of war, we all learned that it was not the colour of one’s skin that mattered, it was the colour of one’s heart,” he said. “Although we cannot undo the injustices of the past, we must as a nation seek a full and dignified reconciliation, based on mutual understanding and respect, and the ability to compromise where necessary.”

My personal conviction about this approach, and its prospects for success, is emboldened by the fact that so many eminent Australians across the political spectrum have formed ranks under the banner of Uphold & Recognise.

Overcoming conflict

In Brewarrina, I saw how tensions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians can lead to appalling conflict. Yet one of the remarkable things about my role as Chairman of Uphold & Recognise has been watching how the movement for recognition is transcending conflict.

Uphold & Recognise’s approach finds expression in a collection of essays called *The Forgotten People*, which was launched by Jeff Kennett last year. He said the book “is a wonderful building block because it brings together some people that you would not expect to support constitutional change, to a point where they either support or they are prepared to consider...” The launch was hosted by Melbourne’s Lord Mayor, Robert Doyle, who said, “I read *The Forgotten People* with enthusiasm” because the authors have “achieved something noteworthy here. They identified that strong leadership and support for Indigenous affairs and Indigenous recognition has often come from the conservative side of politics.”

University of Melbourne’s Professor Cheryl Saunders praised it as “a valuable contribution to this important question at a critical time when events also are moving fast.” Dr Janet Albrechtsen wrote that it is “a marvellous collection of considered and passionate responses from leading Australians. Whether you agree with the proposals or not, each demands our thoughtful attention and reflection.” University of NSW’s Professor George Williams wrote in a review for *The Australian*, “*The Forgotten People* is a further important contribution to this debate. It signals an ongoing commitment and intellectual contribution by a leading cast of conservative figures to the goal of changing the Australian Constitution to recognise Indigenous peoples...”

Rachel Perkins thought *The Forgotten People* “proves that the pursuit of truth and justice is not the sole prerogative of either the left or the right...” Even those as far from the right as Thomas Kenally can see what we are achieving: “You can only succeed if you can convince a lot of people and if you get both conservatives and progressives to agree. That’s the trick—agreement... So I think *The Forgotten People* talks about and promotes a reasonable conservative constitutional change which will have dramatic effect upon our relationship” with Indigenous Australians.

If you look in *The Forgotten People*, you will find arguments for recognition from prominent liberals and conservatives. But more than that, you find a coming together of people who disagree profoundly about all manner of things but who are finding common ground on this issue. Professor Greg Craven and Cardinal George Pell argued for a republic in 1999, and they were opposed by Lloyd Waddy QC and Malcolm Mackerras, who succeeded in thwarting them. And yet all four men now stand united, and each has written in support of the constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians, despite being in conflict about whether Australia should become a republic.

Likewise, former Institute of Public Affairs policy director and Australian Human Rights Commissioner, Tim Wilson MP, who seeks to repeal section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act and to amend the Marriage Act to permit same-sex marriage, finds common ground with Julian Leeser MP, who opposes changes to 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, and the Australian Christian Lobby’s Lyle Shelton, who opposes any change to the definition of marriage in the Marriage Act. Again those who are in political conflict about other issues are finding common ground on this one.

What we are also finding about our approach to this issue is that it is gaining support amongst Indigenous leaders across the divide. A couple of years ago, Warren Mundine and Noel Pearson were diametrically opposed over constitutional recognition. With the publication of Warren’s essay, he and Noel have found common ground in the call for an Indigenous voice to Parliament. Of course they still have different views about how this voice would be best achieved in the Constitution, but there is no doubt that the common ground is growing.

Some commentators have written pessimistically that no progress is being made in this debate and that the consensus necessary for a successful referendum is still a long way off, but this is simply not true. Uphold & Recognise’s work proves that support on the right and the centre-right of the political spectrum is growing, and it looks set to converge on something approximating the consensus that emerged at Uluru.

At an event that Uphold & Recognise hosted at the University Club of Western Australia earlier this year, the Liberal Party’s Christian Porter (federal Minister for Social Services) and Labor’s Ben Wyatt (West Australian Treasurer) spoke of the need to compromise and build consensus on this issue. They participated in a panel discussion with Andrew Forrest, who said,

“To consult with Indigenous people is to right that small wrong, which over time has become a very large wrong, of the failure to recognise Indigenous people in the original Constitution.”

Thus, there is every reason to believe that our approach to finding the common ground will spread across the political divide in federal politics, so long as the Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull, and Leader of the Opposition, Bill Shorten, continue to hold fast to their bipartisan commitment to Indigenous recognition.

Finding the common ground

Today we mark the fiftieth anniversary of the 1967 referendum. It is a symbolic moment in our history, but it is also one that brought about real change. It was able to do so because the advocates for change took seriously the fair and reasonable concerns that potential opponents voiced about change. The result was that the movement for change was able to claim the common ground.

I'm proud to lead Uphold & Recognise, an organisation committed to upholding the Australian Constitution and recognising Indigenous Australians. We see that, fifty years on from the 1967 referendum, we have the opportunity for another symbolic moment in our country's history. It is an opportunity that is only worth pursuing if doing so will make a real difference to the plight of our Indigenous peoples by enabling them to take responsibility for their own destinies. It should also capture our shared aspirations for our nation's shared future by recognising the Indigenous, British and multicultural aspects of our nation's history.

I hold in my hand a road map for getting to a successful referendum within the next twelve months. The road is marked with various signposts. First, we passed the signpost that announced Indigenous aspirations for recognition in the Expert Panel's report. This told us that we needed to find a guarantee that the future of Indigenous Australia would be different from the past. Then we passed the signpost of the constitutional conservatives, which warned us that the guarantee would have to provide constitutional certainty, and that of the liberals, which warned us that the guarantee would also have to be credible.

Today I can see that we are heading for common ground. When I left Brewarrina all those years ago, I couldn't have imagined that I would be part of such a remarkable journey, on which fellow travelers overcome conflict to reach the promised land of Indigenous recognition, economic empowerment, and cultural embrace. I now look forward to planting the flag of recognition in this common ground.

Finding new common ground fifty years after the 1967 referendum

In this essay, Sean Gordon argues that the time has come to find common ground in the debate about recognising Indigenous Australians in the Australian Constitution. There is now a modest package of reforms that can ensure Indigenous aspirations can be realized in a way that addresses the concerns of constitutional conservatives and liberals.

SEAN GORDON is the CEO of Darkinjung Local Aboriginal Land Council, the largest private landowner on the Central Coast of New South Wales. He is a member of the Wangkumarra and Barkindji First Nations and was educated at TAFE and the University of Technology Sydney, from which he graduated with the degree of Bachelor of Education in adult education. He is Convenor of the Empowered Communities Leadership Group, Chairperson of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Dance Academy, and member of the Commonwealth Bank's Indigenous Advisory Committee and the Central Coast Campus Forum. In 2016, he won the UTS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences' Alumni Award for Excellence, and was a finalist for *CEO Magazine's* Energy and Resources Executive of the Year Award and the Urban Development Institute of Australia's Diversity in Development Award. In 2017, he was invited to facilitate the Referendum Council's Regional Dialogue in Dubbo, allowing him to participate in the national convention held at Uluru from 24 to 26 May. His previous writing on Indigenous recognition includes a chapter, "Constitutional Recognition is Not a Feel-good Exercise", in Megan Davis and Marcia Langton (eds), *It's Our Country* (MUP, 2016). In 2017, he succeeded the Hon. Lloyd Waddy AM RFD QC as Chairman of Uphold & Recognise.

UPHOLD & RECOGNISE is a non-profit organisation committed to its charter for upholding the Australian Constitution and recognising Indigenous Australians. It was established by Julian Leeser MP and Damien Freeman when Noel Pearson launched their monograph, *The Australian Declaration of Recognition* on 13 April 2015. It strives to find an approach to constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that addresses the concerns of commentators on the right and centre-right of the political spectrum. This approach is developed in *The Forgotten People* (MUP, 2016), which is edited by Damien Freeman and Cape York Institute's Shireen Morris, and was launched by the Hon. Jeff Kennett AC on 1 June 2016. The second paper in the Uphold & Recognise Monograph Series, Warren Mundine's *Practical Recognition from the Mobs' Perspective*, was launched by Tim Wilson MP on 19 May 2017. For more information, visit www.upholdandrecognise.com or contact the Executive Officer, David Allinson.



Claiming the Common Ground for Recognition is the third paper in the Uphold & Recognise Monograph Series. It and the first two papers, *Declaration of Recognition* and *Practical Recognition from the Mobs' The Australian Perspective*, can be downloaded from the Uphold & Recognise website.