



# ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DISADVANTAGE

## Meeting Segment Guide

Produced by the Policy and Advocacy Team  
as part of the *Social Justice Stocktake*



*We're going to spend some time this morning looking at the disadvantage faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia, and, more specifically, in our community*

The following resources have been created to assist you to run a 5-8 minute segment in your Corps' or mission expression Meeting, Team Meeting, ALT Meeting or any space where you gather with other people.

These resources are ready to print and use in your Meeting. Below you'll find:



TALKING POINTS



A PRAYER TIME GUIDE  
(INCLUDING THREE WRITTEN PRAYERS)



EXTENDED SEGMENT OPTIONS



LINKS TO FURTHER RESOURCES

For further support in connecting with issues in your local community, contact us at [policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au](mailto:policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au)



# Notes prior to beginning your Segment

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- » **Prior to undertaking this Segment, please prepare by finding out who the traditional owners of the land on which where you are.**

Your local government website is generally a good starting point for this information.

- » If you don't do so each time you meet, please commence your meeting with an Acknowledgement of Country (or a Welcome to Country if possible) as found in The Salvation Army's Reconciliation Action Plan. More information about the conventions around Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country can be found through [Reconciliation Australia](#).

*“The Salvation Army acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the lands and water throughout Australia. We extend that respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people here today.*

*We pay our respect to Elders and acknowledge their continuing relationship to this land and the ongoing living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across Australia. We also acknowledge future aspirations of all First Nations peoples.*

*Through respectful relationships we will work for the mutual flourishing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and non-Indigenous Australians.*

*We commit ourselves in prayer and practice to this land of Australia and its people, seeking reconciliation, unity and equity.”*



# Talking Points



## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER DISADVANTAGE

- » **We're going to spend some time this morning looking at the disadvantage faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** in Australia, and, more specifically, in our community. If you are of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander background here today, we want to especially acknowledge you, and the fact that we have much to learn from you in this space.
- » **From time immemorial**, hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations have dwelt on the land now known as Australia.
- » **The Salvation Army acknowledges that despite being the first nations of our country, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples experience disadvantage** disproportionately to other groups in Australia. There are both historical and current contributors to this disadvantage and the experience of colonialism and suppression of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures has an ongoing negative effect on people from these cultures. Importantly, much of the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is created by the systems and structures in our society<sup>i</sup>.
- » **Compared with non-Indigenous Australians, Indigenous peoples have lower life expectancy**, higher rates of infant and maternal mortality, poor health outcomes, lower rates of education and employment, higher rates of mental illness and suicide, lower income and higher rates of incarceration (despite not having a higher rate of criminality)<sup>ii</sup>. This does not have to be the case, and as Christians who believe in the dignity and equality of all people, we must address the roots of this disadvantage.
- » **Rather than trying to address these issues from the outside, we are invited to be alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples** and hear their grief. Uluru Statement from the Heart gives voice to the lament of First Nations peoples of Australia: "Proportionally, we are the most incarcerated people on the planet. We are not an innately criminal people. Our children are alienated from their families at unprecedented rates. This cannot be because we have no love for them. And our youth languish in detention in obscene numbers. They should be our hope for the future. These dimensions of our crisis tell plainly the structural nature of the problem. This is the torment of our powerlessness."<sup>iii</sup>
- » **Systemic reform is desperately required**, and The Salvation Army advocates for change, advised by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders. We advocate for change on both national and local levels, from constitutional reform to local initiatives that address inequality and disadvantage, supporting the Closing the Gap initiative which addresses so many of these issues.
- » **1 John 3:16-18 reminds us: "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us.** And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth" (NIV).
- » **Our love for God and our love for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must not be just an idea or feeling.** The Bible is very clear that Christian love is meant to be sincere and practical. Whenever we witness disadvantage and hardship, we are to be the loving care of Jesus incarnate, challenging injustice and bringing relief.

i. The Salvation Army Australia (2020). A Pathway to Social Justice. [https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/scribe/sites/auaesalvos/files/Advocacy/Pathway\\_to\\_Social\\_Justice\\_Final\\_Accessible\\_Oct13.pdf](https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/scribe/sites/auaesalvos/files/Advocacy/Pathway_to_Social_Justice_Final_Accessible_Oct13.pdf)  
ii. Australian Human Rights Commission (2021). Close the Gap Campaign Report 2021. <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-social-justice/publications/close-gap-2021>  
iii. <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement>



# Talking Points



## WHERE TO FROM HERE?

- » **As a mission-driven organisation, The Salvation Army seeks to reduce social disadvantage and create** a fair and harmonious society through holistic and person-centred ministry. For over a century, we have walked alongside Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, although history reminds us that our actions have not always matched the values we hold dear<sup>iv</sup>. However, our commitment to Indigenous Australians, and working against the inequalities that affect them, remains constant. Our understanding has been strengthened by yarning, truth-telling and reconciliation. Wherever there is hardship or injustice, Salvos will live, love and fight alongside others to transform Australia one life at a time with the love of Jesus.
- » **As individuals and as a faith community, we are invited to partner with local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to close the gap on disadvantage.** Led by God's love, we are invited to listen and walk alongside Indigenous people and ensure our spaces are welcoming and inclusive. Let's commit to learning more about the shared history of this land (even when this can be challenging) and then use this knowledge to show respect and care.
- » **Advised by the Territorial Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Team, The Salvation Army's programs and partnerships aim to learn** about, support, empower and encourage community leaders of the future, as well as help 'Close the Gap'. The Army is working collaboratively towards greater equality in terms of life expectancy, health, housing, education and employment for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals, families and communities. Salvation Army ministries range from school engagement, youth education programs, youth leadership, youth justice, men's and women's programs to housing programs and services, sports programs, recovery and wellness programs, traditional arts and crafts programs, faith expressions, visits by Salvation Army rural and flying chaplains and many more.

<sup>iv</sup> The Salvation Army Australia (2021), Our Commitment to Reconciliation, <https://www.salvationarmy.org.au/about-us/governance-policy/our-commitment-to-reconciliation/>



# Prayer Time

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You may wish to invite people to spend time in silent, individual prayer while one of the songs below plays.

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[Amazing Grace \(My Chains Are Gone\)](#) – Chris Tomlin

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[God of Justice](#) – Tim Hughes

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The Salvation Army Songbook No. 608 – Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace ([lyrics](#))

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The Salvation Army Songbook No. 795 – What A Friend We Have In Jesus ([lyrics](#))

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The Salvation Army Songbook No. 998 – Beauty For Brokenness ([lyrics](#))

Alternatively, you may wish to use the YouTube clip of Gurrumul and Paul Kelly singing [Amazing Grace](#), which features the hymn in Yolngu and English.

Following this time of individual prayer, you may have someone read the three prayers provided below.





# Prayer Time

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## *Prayer for the World*

Jesus, you are the Way. You call us to follow your example of compassion and humility, lovingly attentive to those who are oppressed.

We pause to consider the Indigenous peoples of the world – almost half a billion people representing thousands of languages and millennia of traditional knowledge. Their efforts to maintain cultural identity and custodial lands have been met with violence, dispossession and disadvantage. We grieve with their suffering today.

Jesus, lead your people to walk gently alongside First Nations peoples all over the world – to hear their lament and strive for justice.

*Amen.*



# Prayer Time

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## *Prayer for Australia*

Jesus, you are the Truth. We believe that your truth liberates and heals, and so we entrust ourselves to you. Give us hearts that are willing to listen and willing to learn, even when the truth is uncomfortable.

As we think about this beautiful land now known as Australia, we give thanks for the First Nations peoples you first placed here to care for your creation. We pause to honour the knowledge and wisdom of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who have tended and cared for this land over thousands of years.

Hearing their lament, we seek your justice and truth in Australia. Lead us into reconciliation that brings shalom, that we would work together for the mutual flourishing of the land and all who live here.

*Amen.*



# Prayer Time

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## *Prayer for our community*

Jesus, you are the Life.

Your agenda is that we would know fullness of life,  
abundance and joy.

Forgive us for our ignorance and wilfulness, which has  
led to pain and destruction for Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander peoples. Renew our hope and desire to  
be your followers on a journey of reconciliation and  
love in action.

We pray for abundant life for Aboriginal and Torres  
Strait Islander peoples across this land – for justice,  
for health, for peace, for hope. As your Spirit inhabits,  
envelops and invigorates land, water, plants and  
animals, bring the renewal our hearts long for, we ask.

We follow you on this journey, Jesus. You are the Way;  
You are the Truth; You are the Life..

*Amen.*



# For an extended segment



**If you would like to present an extended segment (that goes for longer than 10 minutes), here are some ideas that may take people deeper:**

- » Invite a local elder to share about their work and some of the challenges faced by Indigenous people in their community
- » Watch the clip explaining the artwork for the Reconciliation Action Plan: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1gfR8PxGr8&t=7s>
- » Watch the clip from The Salvation Army's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Team talking about cultural competence during NAIDOC Week 2021: <http://www.salvastudios.com/videos/2021/naidoc-week-2021-giving-voice-to-aboriginal-amp-torres-strait-islander-peoples?rq=indigenous>
- » Songs performed by indigenous artists, that you might find helpful include:
  - Archie Roach, [Took The Children Away](#)
  - Gurrumul and Paul Kelly cover, [Amazing Grace](#)
  - Paul Kelly and Ziggy Ramo perform, [Little Things](#)
- » Useful Scripture passages:
  - 1 John 3:16-18
  - Matthew 25:31-46
- » Conclude the meeting with this [Blessing from Uncle Vince Ross](#)

## USEFUL SONGS:

[Amazing Grace \(My Chains Are Gone\) – Chris Tomlin](#)

[God of Justice – Tim Hughes](#)

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 608 – Make Me A Channel Of Your Peace \(lyrics\)](#)

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 795 – What A Friend We Have In Jesus \(lyrics\)](#)

[The Salvation Army Songbook No. 998 – Beauty For Brokenness \(lyrics\)](#)

## FOR KIDS

- » During this segment, you may want to engage children in the meeting by providing them with colouring-in sheets featuring Aboriginal designs, for them to colour in as a way of reflecting on what they have heard. Common Grace provides children's resources including [colouring-in sheets](#).



## Further Resources



For more information on this issue, and for further resources:

The Salvation Army Australia has produced many videos on the stories and work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Have a look at: <https://my.salvos.org.au/making-it-happen/>

The Salvation Army's Reconciliation Action Plan is an important document, outlining our commitment to addressing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage within our movement

For more information about the conventions around Welcome to Country and Acknowledgement of Country, please look at the Reconciliation Australia website: <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/acknowledgement-of-country-and-welcome-to-country/>

Take the opportunity to read the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the story of its formation: <https://ulurustatement.org/the-statement>

The Salvation Army Trade/Salvationist Supplies sells Indigenous-designed polo shirts that can be worn in ministry settings to communicate welcome to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our community and open the door to important conversations

If you'd like any further information on this resource please contact the Policy and Advocacy Team at [policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au](mailto:policy.advocacy@salvationarmy.org.au)

*Every person can make a difference.*

**Together, we can make an even greater difference.**





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ARMY