

Thomas Mayo

Indigenous Activist & Author

A Kaurareg Aboriginal and Kalkalgal, Erubamle Torres Strait Islander who is assistant National Secretary of the Maritime Union of Australia and author of seven books about First Nations history and justice.

Thomas Mayo learned to hunt traditional foods with his father and to island dance from the Darwin community of Torres Strait Islanders.

In high school, Thomas' English teacher suggested he should become a writer. He didn't think then that he would become one of the first ever Torres Strait Islander authors to have a book published for the general trade. Instead, he became a wharf labourer from the age of seventeen, until he became a union official for the Maritime Union of Australia in his early thirties.

Thomas found his voice on the wharves. As he gained the skills of negotiation and organising in the union movement, he applied those skills to advancing the rights of Indigenous peoples, becoming a signatory to the Uluru Statement from the Heart and a tireless campaigner. Following the Uluru Convention, Thomas was entrusted to carry the sacred canvas of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. He then embarked on an eighteen-month journey around the country to garner support for a constitutionally enshrined First Nations voice, and a Makarrata Commission for truth-telling and agreement-making or treaties.

As a signatory to the Uluru Statement from the Heart in 2017, he has been instrumental in driving the national campaign for Constitutional Recognition of Australia's First Nations peoples ever since.

Thomas is passionate about Indigenous rights and advocacy. He has crisscrossed the country for many years, speaking with Australians about the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the path to justice and recognition for First Nations People. His books discuss First Nations people's struggle for justice, recognition and equity.

In 2024, 'The Voice to Parliament Handbook', written by Thomas Mayo and Kerry O'Brien, was named the Book of the Year as well as Social Impact Book of the Year and Non-Fiction Book of the Year of the Australian Book Industry Awards (ABIAs).



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