

AIJA Indigenous Youth Justice Conference

Gala Dinner Keynote Speaker



Thomas Mayor

Author

Thomas Mayor is a Torres Strait Islander man born on Larrakia country in Darwin. As an Islander growing up on the mainland, he learned to hunt traditional foods with his father and to island dance from the Darwin community of Torres Strait Islanders. In high school, Thomas's 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.

Quietly spoken in character, 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. Thomas is the author of *Finding The Heart of The Nation*, *Dear Son* and the children's books - *Finding Our Heart* and *Freedom Day*.

Biography and photo sourced from Hardie Grant Publishing