

Submission – Uluru Statement

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On behalf of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)
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Co-design process: Submission on behalf of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC)

Founded in 2001, the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) is Australia's largest independent human rights organisation for people seeking asylum and refugees, supporting and empowering people at the most critical junctures of their journey. Building on our close proximity to those with lived experience, we mobilise and partner for a community of compassion, justice and opportunity. The ASRC supports more than 7,000 people seeking asylum each year through 30+ programs and services across food and material aid, casework, housing support, legal, advocacy, health, empowerment, employment and education.

The ASRC is based in Footscray and Dandenong, in Melbourne on the traditional lands of the Wurundjeri, Woi Wurrung and the Bunurong people of the Kulin Nation. We also have smaller operations in Sydney on the land of the Gadigal people of the Euroa Nation and in Brisbane on the Meeanjin land of the Turrbul and Jagera nations.

The ASRC is supportive of the Uluru Statement.

The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) was established to champion the rights of people seeking asylum and mobilise a community of compassion to create lasting social and policy change.

We acknowledge that we cannot do this without also recognising and championing the rights of Australia's First Nations People, including in Parliament. We stand with First Nations People in welcoming those who come to Australia seeking safety and to live in peace in our community.

We want an Australian society that values and recognises the heritage and culture of First Nations People and the heritage and culture of the people who make Australia their home, as a proud part of our shared identity as a nation. For us, reconciliation is the acknowledgement of First Nations People's unceded sovereignty and a recognition and celebration of their continuing connections to land, waters, community, culture and customs.

As the ASRC is a home of hope for people seeking asylum and an unrelenting champion of human rights, we wish to support and empower First Nations People in the vision of building a society of compassion, equity, justice and opportunity in Australia. The Uluru Statement and enshrining a voice in Australia's Constitution is an important part of this.

Our vision is that all Australians, First Nations and people who have come here seeking asylum, can live safely, sustainably, independently and equally in our communities. If we start with a Voice to Parliament for First Nations people, then hopefully this will create space and place for other marginalised groups, such as people seeking asylum and refugees, to be represented too.

We are strong believers in self-determination - people must be empowered to have a say in matters that affect them. The Uluru Statement provides one important avenue for Indigenous people to have agency, influence and a voice.

Over the years we have seen asylum and refugee legislation change with catastrophic impact on the lives of those seeking safety in Australia. Legislation can be changed as governments change. A Voice to Parliament needs to be permanent, therefore should be enshrined in the Constitution rather than in reversible statute at the whim of political processes and alliances.

We stand in solidarity with First Nations people and believe First Nations people should have a voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Yours faithfully

Kon Karapanagiotidis OAM

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