

28 April 2021

Submission on the Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process Interim Report

Country Arts SA appreciates the opportunity to support an Indigenous Voice to Parliament through this submission on the co-design process. We acknowledge the work undertaken to date led by Professor Marcia Langton AM and Professor Tom Calma AO.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart (Uluru Statement) is a call by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the establishment of a constitutionally enshrined National Voice to Parliament and a Makarrata Commission to undertake processes of treaty-making and truth-telling:

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country. (Uluru Statement from the Heart)

Country Arts SA supports the intentions of the Uluru Statement, including the enshrining of a National Voice to Parliament in the Constitution. It is a symbolic and pragmatic step in recognising the First Peoples of our country.

We support the proposal for the two levels: 1) Local and Regional Voices; and 2) National Voices. Together these will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in every community to have a greater say in public policy, programs and service delivery affecting their lives through shared decision making in partnership with governments.

We support these two structures working together to ensure that the voices of First Nations peoples across the country are heard. They offer empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, inclusive participation, cultural leadership, community led design leading to long term respectful partnerships across all levels. They provide for engagement with all communities to offer advice to governments through shared decision making on a national level.

The membership of both the Local and Regional Voice and National Voice must be determined by First Nations people and ensure appropriate and proportionate representation of First Nations communities across Australia. Community representation and determination of the National Voice are crucial to its validity and authority; and ensures that the Voice is representative of the needs of our First Nations' people.

The National Voice will have a right and responsibility on behalf of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to advise Parliament and the Government with regard to any matters of national significance to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and those of critical importance to the social, spiritual and economic wellbeing, or which has a significant or particular impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians.

We agree that a National Voice must have a proactive, unencumbered scope to advise on priorities and issues as determined by the National Voice.

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Country Arts SA

At Country Arts SA we increase access to the arts for regional South Australian communities and share unique stories through extraordinary arts experiences.

We listen, respond and collaborate.

We produce ambitious and accessible arts experiences.

We present work for people of all ages and interests.

We empower regional communities to create and interact with the arts as audiences, participants, artists and leaders.

Country Arts SA's unique state-wide, multi-artform remit and 25+ years' experience puts us in a singular position to make art and tell stories that can't be made anywhere else in the world, and to contribute to a national cultural identity that embraces the regional communities at its heart.

We want the artists and communities of regional South Australia to thrive through engagement with the arts, and be recognised as valued contributors to the nation's cultural voice.

We want to transform the way the arts are made and engaged with in regional South Australia.

Our goals are measured against key priority areas, the first of which is:

- **First People First:** How we engage and elevate regional Aboriginal Elders, artists and communities, guided by our First Nations Advisory Committee and Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP). We will:
 - Create opportunities for Aboriginal artists and arts workers, and work in collaboration with regional Elders, artists and communities to produce and present work that honours their living cultures.
 - Create opportunities for Aboriginal communities to engage with the arts, and work in collaboration with regional Elders and artists to present culturally appropriate work.
 - Develop our Arts Centres as open, welcoming and accessible community hubs and resources.
 - Work with Aboriginal Elders, artists and communities to increase familiarity with and decolonise our organisation, Arts Centres and program, including increasing employment, representation and access, prioritising Aboriginal culture and arts practice, and centering Aboriginal ways of learning and doing.