

To whom it may concern

Submission to Co-design process

I am a proud Wiradjuri woman. My ancestors are from Dabee, a little place near Kandos and Rylestone. I have always been very lucky to know of my culture and have been proud to be Aboriginal since day one. I grew up in the insular peninsula, also known as the Northern Beaches of Sydney. It was hard to identify as Aboriginal as an eight year old, because I was constantly laughed at, asked what fraction I was, and why I had fair skin if I was Aboriginal. It was a very confusing and distressing time. I am now twenty-three and a Student Advisor at CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program. I, myself went through this program in 2019 when I was in my last year at university. I studied a Bachelor of Human Sciences with a Major in Community Studies and a Minor in Music. I had always wanted to work with vulnerable youth, but after interning, I wanted to work with my mob, the Indigenous population. CareerTrackers has made me open my eyes, and my heart more to being confident as to who we are and what we can achieve. This is because as I grew up alongside my Indigenous brothers and sisters, being told by society and being stereotyped as never going to pursue your career goals, because our mob just 'didn't belong in the corporate spaces'. CareerTrackers helped me build the fire in my belly for good. I learnt how to compose myself when someone asked "where are your clap sticks?", or "you're pretty pale to be Abo". I now know that people need to be educated. More than they were in school, being taught about Rabbit Proof Fence, Eddie Mabo, etc. is great, but we need to educate others on what actually happened. There was a law in place for us to be bred out. There was a law in place that didn't allow my dad to attend pre-school because he was classed us as flora, and fauna. It is time for change, and people in the world need to understand what we have been through as a culture, as a family. What matters to us is our culture, our families, our stories, our land and our country.

Why do you think the Uluru Statement from the Heart is important?

I think that the Uluru Statement from the Heart is important because it will educate not only people going through primary and high school now, but it can allow people in the older generations to be educated because they were bought up in the ages of stereotyping, etc. I think that it is important because it will allow our Indigenous brothers and sisters' voices to be heard, as well as our ancestors.

Why do you think it's important to enshrine the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution, rather than include it only in legislation?

I think it is important to enshrine the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution rather than including it only in the legislation because it will hold whoever, wherever, whatever accountable if it is in the Constitution. It is important that we point our fingers at and recognise people who are disobeying the Constitution now, so why can't we have the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution so we can point the finger at people not abiding by our Constitution that should've been acknowledged years ago.

Why do you think a Voice to Parliament is important?

A voice to Parliament is important because to start with one, is a yell for all. A voice that will allow many other voices be heard is important because it is not just affecting the person that is speaking, it is affecting Indigenous peoples around the country. It is the middle of a movement that is going to push for more movement, and although our mob is so powerful and strong, we are still going to push until we are all heard.

Why is it important for Indigenous people to have a say in the matters that affect them?

It is important because so many decades we have been silenced. When we have spoken out, when we have protested, we have been seen but not truly heard by authorities. There have been marches that have been peaceful, yet we have been thrown to the ground with such force by authorities. The importance of Indigenous peoples to have a say in the matters in which affect us, is because we have gone through inter generational trauma because of the stolen generation that will affect many more generations.

Our voices need to be heard. After decades of trauma, deaths in custody, kids being taken away from their families, brainwashing and the list goes on - our voices need to be heard here, and now. It is 2021 and if the "higher powers" in the house of the privileged (government - not all, but certainly a lot) can make a change to how they truly give back to us, and apologise for the hurt and trauma our ancestors, families and selves go through day to day.

Thank you,
Zoe McCarthy