

30 April 2021

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To whom it may concern,

I am a Professor of International Law and an Australian Research Council Future Fellow in the Faculty of Law & Justice at UNSW Sydney. I write to express support for the Local, Regional and National Voices to Parliament outlined in the Interim Voice Report and for the enshrinement of a First Nations Voice in the Federal Constitution alongside the processes of truth-telling and treaty-making outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

I believe that the Uluru Statement from the Heart presents the Australian Federal Parliament and all Australians with an unprecedented opportunity to take meaningful action towards coming to terms with this nation's foundation on racialised domination and dispossession and its enduring legacies and impacts. This history cannot be undone but it can be told truthfully, faced bravely and addressed through effective re-transfers of power within our constitutional architecture. The Uluru Statement from the Heart offers a clear roadmap for achieving this.

For too long, Indigenous peoples' unceded sovereignty has been negated by forms of power that have not been authorised or accepted by Indigenous peoples. This has compounded and extended the trauma of Indigenous peoples' dispossession with all sorts of devastating and ongoing consequences. Only by creating a mechanism for Australian national sovereignty as a whole - and decisions concerning Indigenous peoples in particular - to be authorised and accepted by Indigenous peoples can this be rectified. It is accordingly of paramount importance that the Voice to Parliament be enshrined in the Australian Constitution. This will afford it the centrality and timelessness that it warrants, given the long history of human habitation of this continent. For both practical and symbolic reasons, this is too crucial a matter to make vulnerable to the periodic passage of legislation.

All Australians stand to benefit from the processes of truth-telling and constitutional renewal that the Uluru Statement from the Heart so generously opens up to us. A flourishing community cannot be sustained amid unhealed wounds, unpaid debts, unacknowledged relations, and untold histories. Please do whatever you can to ensure that this opportunity is not squandered. Please do not hesitate to contact me via the email address below if you have any questions arising from this submission.

Sincerely yours,

Fleur Johns
Professor and Australian Research Council Future Fellow, UNSW Law & Justice