

Submission to the Indigenous Voice co-design process – Dr Richard Cook

I live and work on Dharawal Country and would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which I live and work. I pay my respects to Aboriginal Elders past and present, who are the knowledge holders and teachers.

One of the most important days of my life was becoming an Australian Citizen, which allowed myself and my partner of many years to finally become citizens of the same country in a place we are continually grateful to call home. It was distressing that this day also had to be on January 26th, a day which causes great pain to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. There is still so far to go towards reconciliation, but the Uluru Statement from the Heart and the proposed National Voice to parliament are some of the most important next steps on this journey.

Once the model for the Voice is settled I expect the Government to honour its election commitment to a referendum.

Following the referendum, enabling legislation for the Voice should be passed in the next term of Parliament.

I believe the model for the National Voice should ensure previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

If the Voice to Parliament is enshrined in the Constitution it will not only send a message of the fundamental importance of an Indigenous Voice in the future of our country, but it will also ensure that the politics of the day do not put the rights of Australia's oldest continuing culture at risk.

I believe it is fundamentally important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a say in the laws, policies and services that affect their lives. I believe the National Indigenous Voice is the right approach and a referendum would allow Australians to show their support for this.

Dr Richard Cook