

As a collective of individuals, we are moved by the Uluru Statement from the Heart in its simplicity and generosity as a starting point for necessary, respectful and authentic dialogue between diverse groups.

We accept the invitation to walk, but acknowledge that we can not and do not speak for First Nations in relation to how voice, treaty and truth should be enacted. We do ask that the Government accept the invitation to walk and in doing so, allow itself to be led by its citizens, especially those most unheard among us.

As a group of predominantly colonial-european descendents and immigrants, the Uluru Statement has led us to a deeper contemplation of the meaning of citizenship in the Australian context. Central to our understanding of citizenship is the notion of connectedness between individuals, groups of individuals and communities that together comprise our society. This is a continual process defined by engagement with each other and the myriad identities that all Australian citizens bring to the discussion.

In our professional and academic lives, we are committed to working with organisations to discover and listen to all of the voices that are held by their members, employees and stakeholders. It is through this exploration and listening, filled with tension and conflict though it may be, that true connection and shared learning is made possible.

Although Indigenous people have individual voices as part of Australia's (Western) democratic processes, there is an important collective voice that is not being listened to. And there are so many Indigenous voices who have been forever silenced by colonial settlement that the imbalance of powerful voices in our present day democracy is plain and cruel. This missing voice results in our collective loss of connectedness between groups within and across the Australian citizenry.

And so, we participate here in this process not just for ourselves, but for the people and generations who follow us. We write for emerging leaders and elders of all cultures and for our children. We speak up, recognising that many who might want to haven't yet found their voice, or maybe lost it long ago.

In supporting the Voice, we would also ask the Government to not just view this as the end of a process and limited only to a Voice that provides advice. It must be seen as an important step taken by the current generation to explore new possibilities that future generations can build on to create new modes of connectedness between Indigenous and colonial/immigrant Australians. We call on the Government to pursue the necessary referendum to formalise and legitimise Indigenous Voices to parliament and Government.

We value the idea of makaratta, outlined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. From this position of coming together after a struggle, we know that our own roles in the coming together will bring up many unknowns, confronting challenges, and new experiences. We are here for this: as ready as we can be in stepping in to the struggle, not away from it. We ask the government to not be overwhelmed by or give in to dominant voices expressing fear. We believe in the role of government to assist all citizens in not just having a voice, but also in learning how to listen. Through listening, we can set out to arrive at a place that sees treaty(ies) not as a collective sacrifice, but as a collective benefit in something much richer. This message offers direction and hope for people, and is a message that governments can show leadership in promoting and exploring.

As Thomas Brideson, CEO of Gayaa Dhuwi (Proud Spirit) Australia, has recently said, "If the only thing that we ever do is the same thing we did yesterday, then tomorrow is not going to change one little bit." We must seek change together.

Truth telling is important to us. Part of understanding and acknowledging the truth requires creating spaces and listening to voices in more honest discussion and debate that recognises and values different voices. We are ready for the discomfort and disruption the 'voice' will bring and how hard it may be to truly listen and sit with our shame.

We are hopeful and - more than hopeful - filled with expectation, that our governments will lead a positive, proactive discourse about our mutual roles in creating a better future, together. In makaratta.

A group of citizens

Judy Kent

Margo Lockhart

Deb Martindale

Paul Dore

Sally Mussared

Seth Thomasson

Susan Campbell