

**26 March 2021**

I write as a 22-year-old non-Indigenous university student from Katherine NT in response to the Interim Voice Report.

It is my view, that the First Nations Voice, as called for by the Uluru Statement of the Heart be enshrined in the Constitution. The Uluru Statement of the Heart represents the desires of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples across the country; peoples that have been frequently politically forgotten by successive governments and parliament. Constitutional enshrinement of a First Nations Voice will give it enduring legitimacy, provide for a national discussion through the referendum process and reflect Australia's Indigenous history.

The Voice should be enshrined in the Constitution in order to provide it with the necessary legitimacy to form its much-needed function in the Australian Parliament. Through constitutional enshrinement, the Voice will not be able to be abolished at the whim of Parliament or easily ignored. The public participation required of a constitutional referendum, as opposed to legislation, will ensure that the design of the Voice is consistent with the expectations endorsed by the public. An amendment approved by the people voting in a referendum will educate the public on the importance of a Voice in parliament and give the discussion of our country's deep Indigenous past the recognition it deserves.

The necessary legislation needed to set up a First Nations Voice should not be passed until a constitutional amendment has taken place. If legislation was passed before a referendum, it would limit the potential for achieving real transformative constitutional reform and reconciliation and would reduce the likelihood that the Voice would ever be constitutionally enshrined. This would be disrespectful to the demands contained in the Uluru Statement of the Heart that has been collectively endorsed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Constitutional enshrinement of a First Nations Voice would see Australia's true history acknowledged and respected in a way that has a distinct standing and an enduring impact. As a young person in Australia, in this time of progress and acceptance, it is not fathomable that we could consider proceeding for another 120 years under a system of governance overseen by a document that is blind to our history.

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