



30 April 2021

National Indigenous Australians Agency  
Voice Secretariat  
PO Box 2191 Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission: Voice Co-Design Process

I am a solicitor working in the community legal sector, where I provide legal services to vulnerable people through a Health Justice Partnership at [REDACTED] Dental Hospital. The Partnership works predominantly with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are particularly at risk of poor health and unmet legal need.

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

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is an important expression of self-determination by the First Nations people of Australia. It lays out a vision for substantive and structural reform, namely, the establishment of a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament and a Makarrata Commission 'to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history'.

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

The Voice to Parliament must be enshrined in the Australian Constitution not only because this is the only proposal for constitutional recognition that has received broad support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but also to ensure that the Voice to Parliament has the legitimacy and stability it needs to carry out its functions.

**How could a Voice to Parliament improve the lives of your community?**

A Voice to Parliament would allow Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to provide meaningful input to law- and policy-making and improve outcomes for their communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people continue to experience racial discrimination and other human rights violations in many spheres of life. They have shorter life expectancy, higher rates of infant mortality, poorer health and lower levels of education and employment and these disparities are linked to systemic discrimination.

There is clearly a need for urgent, fundamental reform. A First Nations advisory body to the Australian Government and Parliament would be best placed to guide such reform.

I therefore ask that the Australian Government:

1. honour its election commitment to a referendum once a model for the Voice has been settled;
2. pass enabling legislation for the Voice after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament; and
3. ensure that the membership model for the National Voice is such that previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

Kind regards,

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