


Dr Sylvia Ramsay



To Co-Design Body

Co-design process: Submission for Sylvia Ramsay

I am a white Australian with free settler and convict heritage. I support the Uluru Statement of the Heart and wish to have an Indigenous voice represented in our government.

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

We need a diversity of voices to be heard when laws are made. We have problems arising from parliament being a place where there are too many white men. The continual struggle for over 110 years of other members of society such as women and people of colour illustrates that there are many structural determinants that have caused parliament to over-represent white men. The framework proposed by the Uluru Statement of the Heart goes some way to address some of these structural inadequacies and enable Indigenous perspectives to be heard when laws are made that pertain to them.

*Why is it important for Indigenous people to have a say in the matters that affect them?*

The current system has not been optimal for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and it is also proving inadequate to address the looming challenge of climate change. Future challenges will require new ways of thinking and doing. Particularly an ability to recognise the need to protect our ecosystem. Fortunately Indigenous philosophies offer insight into how to do this. If humans are to survive the challenges of anthropogenic environmental change we need to hear what Indigenous people say.

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

The Australian Parliament suffers because it is dominated by a group of people that are not representative of my community or myself. Having another perspective could open a door to help us deal with many of the problems people in my community face, not because they are Indigenous but because the system favours upper to middle class white men and doesn't understand the challenges faced by being poor, not white and not male.

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

Too often voices that would question the status quo are ignored or abolished. We have seen dismantling of structures set up in the past to allow indigenous voices to be heard, also voices speaking out against corruption, against collusion and against discrimination. When structures are subject to political whims it makes them vulnerable and reduces their ability to speak truth to power.

As a white Australian I am disgusted that Prime Minister has portrayed the Uluru Statement of the Heart as a third chamber of parliament and un-democratic. This misinformation creates fear and unnecessary division within Australian people.

Yours Sincerely

Sylvia Ramsay