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Voice Secretariat
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Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission. I am an international law professor and author of the book *Indigenous Peoples and Human Rights: International and Comparative Jurisprudence* (Bloomsbury, London 2016).

My submission makes one point. International law recognizes the right of self-determination of indigenous peoples, which includes their right to freely determine their political status, to exercise autonomy or self-government in their affairs, and to maintain their distinct political and other institutions while participating in state institutions (United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, articles 3-5).

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is understood to embody the most contemporary, representative, and authoritative statement of the self-determination aspirations of Australia's indigenous peoples. The Uluru Statement relevantly states:

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a *rightful place* in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

In this light, in my view only a constitutionally enshrined Voice would be consistent with the right of self-determination of indigenous peoples – and Australia's international legal obligation to respect and ensure it. It is the only model which would fully and legitimately reflect indigenous rights of political representation, participation, and equality.

The long-standing denial of indigenous political institutions and participation also contributes directly to related violations of their other human rights and freedoms, including civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights; their lower quality of life; and the inter-generational perpetuation of structural and racial inequalities.

After 230 years, it is my great hope that Australia will now be able to fully recognize and respect the rights of indigenous peoples whose lands, freedoms and autonomy were violently taken during the conquest of this continent – which itself was done in a manner manifestly contrary to the international and common law in force in 1788.

Yours sincerely

[Professor Ben Saul]