

SUBMISSION TO INDIGENOUS VOICE CO-DESIGN PROCESS

I support the Uluru Statement from the Heart and it's outcome to secure a voice for Indigenous people to parliament, protected by the constitution.

I believe that the Uluru Statement represents the consensus views of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who participated at the First Nations National Constitutional Convention which was supported by the Government and was a comprehensive inclusive process.

The Uluru Statement provides an important opportunity for Australia to address the legacies caused by the dispossession of its Indigenous peoples and provides a pathway to self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart calls for the enshrinement of a First Nations Voice in the Australian Constitution with the power to advise the Australian parliament on laws that affect Indigenous peoples, and the establishment of a Makarrata Commission to oversee a process of treaty making and truth-telling.

I believe that truth-telling and treaty must be the building blocks for uniting all Australians behind this campaign.

It is vital that First Nations Peoples have a Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution so that their views at the local, regional and national level are heard and respected by the Parliament on all issues which impact directly on them.

Government engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been marked by bureaucratic, top-down decision making in which they are positioned as recipients rather than as active participants.

If we are to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians regarding outcomes in education, employment, income, health and life expectancy, they must have a voice protected by the Constitution. It must be established by a referendum which polling indicates is supported by a majority of Australians. A legislated Voice would not give First Nation's Peoples the certainty they demand as stated in the Uluru Statement from the Heart because governments change, with the risk that legislation can be amended to remove a First Nations Voice.

The co-design proposals in the Interim Report should ensure that there is two-way communication between the National Voice and local and regional voices representing their communities.

Recognition of Indigenous Voice has been an election promise of the last three Prime Ministers of Australia. It is now time to sit down with Indigenous people and deliver this promise.

Regards

Helen Abrahams