

The Voice submission

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission in response to the Indigenous Voice Discussion Paper.

I live on the land of the Gadigal people and have worked with people from a number of other nations to help build Aboriginal controlled housing options that could help provide a proper base from which to help close the gap.

So this submission comes with a strong understanding of the way in which the dispossession, exclusion, racism and violence inflicted on Aboriginal people continuously from colonisation to this day has damaged generations of this country's first nations. This is a history that must first be fully acknowledged and understood by everyone who has, and who continues, to benefit from it, whether it was the capture of original pastoral settlements in the frontier wars, the households who benefited from the free labour of the stolen generations or the devastation caused by miners today. Only then can we find a just settlement.

One of the most telling gaps at this time is the lack of recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait peoples in the current constitution. As a result, it has served to benefit white Australians at the expense of the country's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This means the constitution must not only recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, but it must do so in a way that gives them a true voice in the laws and policies made under its powers.

Australia is one of a number of countries that have the particular history of having been founded on the dispossession of the original inhabitants. As a result, it requires distinct provisions in its constitution and governance that recognise and address the effects of this history.

Equally – or better, as part of this – we must create a just settlement by negotiating treaties that with traditional custodians. And all of this requires an honest and forward looking understanding of the shameful history that has brought us to this point. It requires a clear understanding that the dispossession the nation of Australia was founded on has been ongoing and continues in many forms today.

Enshrining the Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution will contribute to a just recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and progress the struggle for sovereignty and self-determination.

Then we start to heal this divided nation.

Because of this, I strongly urge the adoption of the three core calls of Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander people that:

- The government honour its election commitment to a referendum once the model for the Voice has been settled;
- Enabling legislation for the Voice is passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament; and

- The membership model for the National Voice ensures that previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

I thank you for considering my submission and look forward to your considered response.

Sincerely

Adam Farrar,