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To Co-Design Body

Submission for Co-design process

I am the CEO of Knight Frank Australia and I represent the thoughts of our national workforce of 711 fulltime employees within this submission. On this important matter, we speak as one voice.

Knight Frank is a global property consultancy business represented in 60 territories worldwide and headquartered in London. We celebrate our 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year; a significant milestone in a Western context, but we acknowledge it as a blink of the eye in comparison to the rich culture practiced continuously by our First Nations peoples in Australia for over 60,000 years.

At Knight Frank Australia, we have instituted a comprehensive strategy to broaden diversity within the organisation and ensure that equal opportunity is embedded into our processes and culture. Our strategy includes the Knight Frank Corporate Social Responsibility Strategy, which focuses on People, Community and Planet.

We devised our 'Reflect' Reconciliation Action Plan in 2020 and have committed to meaningful change across our National business to build lasting relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and enhance employment opportunities, both directly and in collaboration with our clients, stakeholders and partnerships.

By embarking on this journey, we hope to be able to have a positive impact on the social fabric of the many communities in which we operate, across Australia, built on respectful relationships and trust. We are committed to this action, which is why we feel it important to share our opinion in relation to the Interim Voice Report.

**Where you are from – where you live, where you grew up.**

Our workforce is representative of all communities and heritages in Australia. This includes Australians of European, Asian, North and South American, Indian, African, New Zealand / Pacific Islands and Middle Eastern heritage and, of course, our First Nations peoples. All Faiths are also represented within our workforce and we operate across all States within Australia.

We are therefore a 'broad church,' representative of Australian society and we are unanimously in agreement that our First Nations people's Voice to Parliament must be established through a referendum and enshrined within our Constitution.

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

The Uluru Statement from the Heart perfectly encapsulates the perspective of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in present day Australia.

It is a respectful request to fellow Australians for a First Nations Voice and structural change, enshrined within our Constitution, to enable a say on policy matters that directly affect their communities. It also calls for a Makarrata Commission to supervise the process of agreement and enable a truth telling about their history.

They ask this not for the betterment of themselves in isolation, but for the betterment of Australian society as a whole. Our inability to adequately deal with the past treatment of our First Nations peoples is a continuing blot on our otherwise remarkable story, as is the lack of Voice and self-determination that they have been afforded to date.

These inadequacies will hold our Nation back if not confronted, acknowledged and authentically discussed with our First Nations peoples. We are building our society on a foundation of metaphorical sand without this process and without affording them an equal Voice.

The inherent wisdom of our First Nations peoples has been overlooked and discounted since the First Fleet arrived in 1778. For over 60,000 years prior, the First Nations lived harmoniously and sustainably in this land now called Australia. For that alone, they deserve our unreserved respect. There is much that we can learn from them from a cultural values perspective, not least in respect to human induced climate change, finding the solution for which is the imperative of our time.

All Australians should view the Uluru Statement From The Heart as an olive branch from our First Nations peoples, who continue to endure policy settings from the Australian Government ranging from indifference to neglect. They are providing their fellow Australians with a precious opportunity; to make amends for the past, heal as a Nation and boldly advance together, united.

Our collective response as Australians to the Uluru Statement will define us as a Nation for generations to come.

Knight Frank Australia wholeheartedly supports the Uluru Statement and its humble requests.

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

It is vitally important that our First Nations peoples be afforded the respect and dignity of a genuine say in matters that affect their communities. Successive Australian Governments have viewed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policies through the lens of Western culture and ideals. These policies have repeatedly failed and we feel that all Australians are deeply disappointed and affected by this failure. As a successful Nation on a world stage, Australians are not accustomed to failure and it is hard to accept, not least for our First Nations peoples who wait patiently for their Voice and to be heard. We cannot imagine the frustration they have endured and it is to their eternal credit that they continue to respectfully and patiently extend a hand and offer Makarrata; 'a coming together after a struggle.'

Until we accept their generous offer, outlined in the Uluru Statement, the struggle continues and there can be no coming together, to the detriment of all Australians.

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

A Voice to Parliament for our First Nations peoples would immediately benefit all Australians through their empowerment. The feeling of powerlessness and despair in the First Nations communities is palpable

and intergenerational, but we feel that confidence and optimism about the future would quickly return if an authentic Voice to Parliament were granted and genuine discourse occur.

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

We believe it is important to enshrine the Voice to Parliament in our Constitution as, once added, the Voice is immutable and beyond the reach of future political maneuvering. It is also a significant and deserved mark of respect for our First Nations peoples and demonstrates our authentic desire to reconcile.

**Do you have any other comments for the submission?**

As a company, Knight Frank Australia employs 711 full time employees across Australia. We interact daily with large corporations, including ASX 50 companies, and the message is clear; reconciliation is important to the health and vitality of our society and tangible action by Government is long overdue. The reconciliation movement gains momentum daily and is an important aspect in CSR and ESG policies in boardrooms across Australia. This submission is therefore indicative of the views of much of Corporate Australia.

Corporations are living organisms; a collective of individuals coming together in common purpose and as such their policies and processes are driven by the views of their employees and their shareholders. It is incumbent upon me, as CEO, to understand these views and lead my company by example.

So too, it is incumbent upon the Australian Government to represent the will of the Australian people. We believe this will should be expressed through a referendum to grant our First Nations peoples the respect they deserve and a 'Voice to Parliament' enshrined in our Constitution.

Yours sincerely

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