



30 April 2021

To whom it may concern

Co-design process: Submission for Kelly Altenburg on behalf of Community Services #1

My name is Kelly Altenburg. I was born in Sydney and grew up in Canberra, which is also where I now live and work. I am writing this submission on behalf of my organisation, Community Services #1 (CS1). I am the Corporate Operations Director and this submission is strongly endorsed by our CEO, Amanda Tobler, and the CS1 leadership collective. CS1 is a profit-for-purpose organisation that provides emotional and practical support to over 2,000 children, young people, women and men every year. Our programs and services across Canberra and New South Wales include early childhood services, aged care services, health services, youth and family wellbeing support programs, transport services, social support groups, a food pantry, housing support, and singing and activity groups.

Why CS1 thinks the Uluru Statement from the Heart is important

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a clear, concise and collectively-voiced communication to Australia and its governments explaining what actions First Nations people need to feel recognised, relevant and heard in today's Australia. It's important because our First Nations peoples are telling us in their own words how we can truly acknowledge our collective past and start to become one nation in all respects.

How a Voice to Parliament could improve the lives of our community

Communities work best when government makes decisions with people, not for (or 'to') people. In the short term, our broader community would be improved by a Voice to Parliament because the traditional owners of the lands on which we live, work and socialise would have a say in all matters that may impact or benefit them. CS1 would expect a Voice to Parliament to enable some of our community's most marginalised peoples to start to feel safer, visible, heard. Longer term, CS1 would expect reconciliation to stand a greater chance of success, health and education outcomes to improve, life expectancy to increase and incarceration and forced family separations to decrease.

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

It is important that all peoples have a say in the matters that affect them. Decisions made on behalf of Australia's indigenous peoples since settlement - however well-intended - have resulted in multi-generational trauma, lower health, education outcomes, lower life expectancy, and higher incarceration and forced separation of families. The government is more consultative today than ever before, yet the harm continues; current consultation approaches do not work.

Why CS1 thinks it's important to enshrine the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution, rather than include it only in legislation

Simply, because that is what First Nations people have asked for in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Including the Voice to Parliament in legislation, only, could reasonably be seen by First Nations peoples as another example of government refusing to hear what they have to say. First Nations peoples have asked for a Voice to Parliament that is protected by the Constitution. CS1 would expect legislating the Voice to Parliament will make implementation very challenging; protection under the Constitution will better set up a Voice to Parliament for success.

Once a model for the First Nations Voice to Parliament has been developed, CS1 expects Government to deliver its election promise to conduct a referendum for the Voice to be protected by the Constitution. However the final model for the Voice to Parliament looks, it must ensure previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures. Following the referendum, CS1 would expect legislation to be tabled and passed at first opportunity.

Kind regards

Kelly Altenburg
Corporate Operations Director
kelly.altenburg@communityservices1.org
(02) 6126 4744