

Agnieszka Czezowski
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To Co-Design Body

Co-design process: Submission for Agnieszka Czezowski

I am born a first-generation Australian, from Polish and Vietnamese migrant parents. I was raised in Canberra, lucky enough to explore Ngannawal land. I moved to Sydney a few years ago and am currently in my 4th year of a Bachelor of Social Work (Honours) and a Bachelor of Social Research and Policy at the University of New South Wales. I am involved with the Sydney Alliance, a coalition of community and religious organisations to collectively fight for the common good.

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

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is important because it is a genuine invitation from First Nation Australians to us non-Indigenous Australians to work together. This statement represents and was drawn from their own experiences, knowledges, cultures, and voices, which is unfortunately uncommon for Australian policies and structures. It is a statement that embodies First Nations cultures of oneness and encourages us to feel the same connection and attitude toward our nation and all those that call Australia home. Despite centuries of structural and systematic inequalities and injustices faced by First Nation Australians, this statement is a call to action. A call to stand with. As Lila Watson famously quotes 'if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together'. It gives non-Indigenous Australians perspective, in recognising that in our healing, of the guilt and shame that colonialism carries through privilege and prejudice, First Nation Australians invite us to heal, together.

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

A Voice to Parliament could improve the lives of my community but encouraging a culture of democracy. For my community to see First Nations' peoples, knowledges and cultures in parliament would empower other diverse minority groups that have been oppressed by the systems and structures here in Australia to explore their capacities in this land of opportunity, as Australians are proud to call it. It would create a greater sense of belonging to us all, First Nations, migrants, first-generation, sixth-generation, people seeking asylum or international students.

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

Enshrining the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution is important to ensuring a place of equal power in the sovereignty of this nation. It will demonstrate First Nation Australian's sovereignty and the Crown's sovereignty to coexist as an example for our systems, structures, policies, workplaces and communities. It will empower First Nations to flourish and too, benefit from the opportunities this nation presents, as we recognise First Nations knowledges and cultures to enrich, deepen and strengthen our communities.

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

It is important for First Nation Australians to have a say in the matters that affect them because it matters for us all to have a say in matters that affect us. That's how policies, systems and structures can be more effective and efficient in all sectors of society, based on how those it directly affects inform and engage. Particularly, First Nation Australians have been denied a voice since this system and structures were implemented from colonisation, they have been misrepresented, overrepresented and of course, the lack thereof representation in decisions and matters that affect them. Hence, the perpetuating injustices and disadvantages of policy informed by knowledges that cannot redress or even consider First Nation's lived experience or perspective.

Thank you,
Agnieszka Czezowski