

Fabian McDonald  
Marrickville 2204 NSW

**Dear Co-Design Body**

**Co-design process: Submission for Fabian McDonald**

I was born and raised in Sydney and have Italian and Scottish ancestry. I am 41 years old, married with two children and currently work as a web designer/developer.

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

Three main reasons:

Firstly, it fulfils the wishes of the wider Indigenous community in Australia. I can't pretend to know the true significance of this means from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspective. But a large and varied group of people have come together, deliberated, arrived at a consensus and have said that this *is* important. That's all I need to know.

Secondly, it contributes to upholding our obligations as signatories to the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Thirdly, it's a beautifully written document which everyone can understand.

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

From my perspective, legislation is for specific aspects of governing a nation. These can be changed and amended as circumstances or society at large, evolve. The Constitution on the other hand defines general foundational principles that help frame those specific laws.

While it is possible to change the Constitution, by its very nature it is more permanent in order to protect the rights of citizens and not be susceptible to political whims or abuses of power. For Australians, both indigenous and non-indigenous, to have any faith in the Voice to Parliament, it needs to have this same special status. That is why I believe it is important for it to be enshrined in the Constitution rather than include it only in legislation.

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

A defining principle of democracy is that the people have a direct say in how they are governed and there is equality amongst the various groups that make up society. For too long Indigenous people in Australia have had no say in how they are governed.

Ultimately, from my perspective, it doesn't come down to whether you believe that Indigenous people should have a say in the matters that affect them or not. It comes down to whether you believe in equality. It is important for Indigenous people to have a say in the matters that affect them just like it is important for any group to have a say in the matters that affect them.

Having lived overseas I truly believe that Australia does a decent job of this to the varied groups that make up its multicultural society... except when it comes to Aboriginal people. This needs to change. We cannot in good conscience call ourselves a true democracy until we rectify this.

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

I can't speak for the Indigenous people in the community where my family and I live, but from my own perspective, I think little will change in my day to day life. However, I do hope it will lead to the breaking down of barriers and mistrust that often exist between indigenous and non-indigenous communities. And I believe that in itself would improve the lives of the wider community where I live.

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When Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people make up 3% of the general population but 28% of the prison population, it means there is something fundamentally broken in the system. This is even before you consider that the rate of incarceration is going up, not down. Something needs to be done.

While I don't think any single action will fix this, a dramatically different approach is required. The Uluru Statement from the Heart can be a catalyst for that.

Yours sincerely,

**Fabian McDonald**