

Voice Secretariat,
CANBERRA ACT 2601
April 2021
Email: co-designvoice@niaa.gov.au

To the Voice Secretariat,

As a member of the Wellspring Community Inc. I support the interim Report of the Co-Design Process of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. I wish to express my support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We have accepted the generous invitation of Makarrata to walk with our Indigenous peoples in a movement of the Australian people for a better future. To this end we have developed a partnership with the Indigenous led organisation Common Grace. We support the way forward outlined by *From the Heart* (<https://fromtheheart.com.au/>).

Wellspring Community Inc, is an Australian ecumenical Christian community committed to social justice. We acknowledge that we live on Aboriginal land that has never been ceded and that negotiations around a treaty have never been completed. We support the expressed desire of First Nations Peoples for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament enshrined in the constitution. As they point out, only structural change will address the current problems and undo "*the torment of our powerlessness.*" We wish to stand beside our Indigenous sisters and brothers in their desire for justice, self-determination, treaty and truth telling. As the age-old maxim says " the truth will set you free".

As it takes the next step to establish an Indigenous Voice, I ask the Australian Government to:

1. Prioritise and honour calls for treaty and truth telling.
2. Honour its 2019 election commitment to a referendum, allowing the Australian people to vote on enshrining a Voice to Parliament.
3. Ensure enabling legislation for the Indigenous Voice to Parliament is passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament; The work being done now must be protected for future generations and not removed at the whim of future politicians.
4. The membership model for the National Voice must ensure previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures, particularly grassroots Indigenous leaders.
5. We need one National Voice, not separated into state and territory boundaries
6. We have over 300 distinct Aboriginal nations. The number of members needs to reflect this. The proposed number of members (currently 20 when Territory representatives are added) is insufficient to give true representation."

I recognise the enormous diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their deep spiritual connection to the land and I believe that a Constitutional Voice to Parliament will be all the richer for ensuring it is properly reflective of this diversity and spirituality. I believe that enshrining an indigenous Voice to Parliament in our country's Constitution is a critical step towards much needed reconciliation.