

I am writing this submission in support of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution. I am a non-Indigenous Australian who strongly believes that we cannot move forward together in a meaningful way until we take this important step. I believe there are many other non-Indigenous Australians who feel the same. The support for this recognition is clearly strong and growing.

We must listen to and respond to the Uluru Statement from the Heart's invitation to "walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future." How can such an invitation be ignored?

The Voice to Parliament will empower Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders to have a say on the laws and policies that impact them. It needs to be a permanent institution that will provide advice to the Parliament and Government on important issues. The permanence is important to provide certainty. If the Voice is not enshrined in the Constitution, what message does this send? This is not important enough? It is clear that it is.

There is no denying there is a lot of work required to repair the damage done since invasion. By enshrining the Voice in the Constitution, we can send a message that we as a country are committed to doing that work, and that we accept that the only way we can move forward is with Indigenous voices guiding the process.

There is a long way to go and lots of work to be done. But until we enshrine a First Nations Voice in the Constitution, we cannot move forward. Actions matter. Words matter. Having a voice matters.

I implore the Government to take the opportunity that has been offered to it. More specifically, I

- Call on the Government to honour its election commitment to a referendum once a model for the Voice has been settled; and
- Call for enabling legislation for the Voice to be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament.

Yours sincerely

Evelyn Bowes