

## **National Indigenous Voice Consultation**

**Submitted 30 April 2021**

### **About Reconciliation WA**

Reconciliation WA (RWA) is a not-for-profit Organisation providing leadership, advocacy and support to people and organisations driving the movement for Reconciliation in Western Australia (WA).

At our core, Reconciliation WA is focused on the creation of societal and economic outcomes that help create a State where the special place, culture, rights and contribution of First Peoples are valued and respected. As an organisation, we aspire to be part of a State that celebrates strong and positive relationships between our First Peoples and the wider WA community, as critical building block of practical social and economic outcomes and community wellbeing.

### **Submission by the Board of Reconciliation WA**

The Board of Reconciliation WA is overall supportive of the Reconciliation Australia Submission to the National Indigenous Voice consultation process. In addition, we would like to highlight some State based priorities for consideration.

Reconciliation WA strongly supports the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*. It hopes that the co design process and the establishment of a national structure and local and regional structures will ultimately enable a constitutionally enshrined voice to Parliament.

We believe the way the model is implemented is as important as the model itself and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people must lead the process and determination of the structures.

The Board has considered the models the National Voice and the Local and Regional Voices put forward in the Discussion paper. It supports a structural membership model for the National Voice with membership of the National Voice flowing from the Local and Regional Voices as the best means of ensuring that the National Voice is seen as representing all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and people.

Due to the vastness of Australia and the complexity of its many communities the National Voice is most likely to be accepted as the legitimate voice of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander if its membership is seen as coming from the grass roots. This could flow from Local and Regional Voices established in accordance with the model proposed.

Whilst we endorse the Local and Regional Voice model, we note the required level of regional differences to take into account the enormous variability across regions. If the approach proposed is to be seen as genuine, appropriate timelines and support structures must be put into place to enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander led co-designed outcomes.

#### *The essential participation by governments.*

The Local and Regional Governance structures will involve all tiers of Government to deliver the design outcomes. Governments themselves must change. Systemic transformation will be required in the processes to equip governments to connect, serve and be flexible to respond to regional and community needs. This will require commitment and a united effort between Federal, State and Local Governments. For example, the Western Australian Government is currently implementing its

Aboriginal Empowerment Strategy, the National Federation Reform Council (NFRC), the Peaks and the Empowered Communities agenda. It will be vital to harness the efforts across tiers of Government to ensure all of these enable the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership and Cultural Authorities and people to be heard.

On a positive note, the Western Australian State Government Aboriginal Affairs Team were represented at The Voice consultations in this State and have invested in the process.

The number of regions in Western Australia should take into account the diversity and cultural groupings in our vast state and the final number should at least reflect, but seek to improve, the diversity of existing regional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander governance structures. Careful consideration should be given of previous regional structures from ATSIC and others in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Leadership and Cultural Authorities. We encourage more, not less regions to ensure the diversity of voice and needs across Western Australia and other States are taken into account.

We acknowledge the widespread anxiety about past Aboriginal voices such as NAC, ADC, ATSIC and Congress being unilaterally shut down by successive governments and the need to ensure the security of the National Indigenous Voice through constitutional enshrinement.