

Submission to Voice Co-Design Process

I write from Jagera land in Meanjin – Brisbane – to give my unreserved support to a Voice for First Nations people of Australia in this country's Constitution. In doing so, I acknowledge the traditional owners of the land and the waters of this country and pay my respects to elders: past, present and emerging.

The resilience of First Nations Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people in this country confirms the inestimable value of their contribution to Australian life. The country would be greatly diminished without that contribution. Yet, First Nations' people have been subject to more than two centuries of white colonization. In order to reverse the impact of this colonization and the Frontier Wars that were part of that process, it is imperative that First Nations Australians have a Voice to Parliament that is enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

Until there is justice for all First Nations Australians, Australia cannot claim to have a fair or equitable society. An important step toward achieving that justice will come with a Constitutionally enshrined Voice to the Australian Parliament.

I therefore respectfully request the following:

1. That the government unequivocally honour its election commitment to hold a referendum once a model for the Voice has been settled,
2. That, after that referendum is held, there be an immediate introduction and passing of legislation that enables the Voice to be enshrined in the Constitution, and
3. That there be support for a membership model for the National Voice which ensures that previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have an equal chance of selection for representation as established leadership figures.

All Australians will benefit from the above template for justice for First Nations' Australians. There are many areas identified by the parties to the National Agreement on Closing the Gap which confirm the fact that Indigenous Australians must have greater say in determining their own futures. The enormous success of local Indigenous Australian communities in managing the COVID threat is testimony to this. A Voice to Parliament enshrined in the Constitution will ensure opportunities for the voices of more and more Indigenous Australians to be heard.

In conclusion, I wish to argue vehemently against a Voice provided by legislation only. Legislative reform is subject to change at the whim of the administration in power. It is therefore not a valid means of protecting the right to be heard of First Nations' Australians. A Voice enshrined in the Constitution following the referendum promised as an election commitment by the government is the sole means available to ensure that a diverse range of Indigenous voices can contribute to the laws, policies and services that impact on their lives.

I appreciate the opportunity to make this submission and urge support for the points made above

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