

30 April 2021

Voice Secretariat
Reply Paid 83380
Canberra ACT 2610
By Email: Co-designvoice@niaa.gov.au

Dear Secretariat,

Submission in Support of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament

The Central Coast Community Legal Centre (**Central Coast CLC**) is a not for profit community organisation based in Wyong on the NSW Central Coast. Central Coast CLC provides free, accessible and non-judgemental legal information, advice and representation services to disadvantaged people living, working or studying on the NSW Central Coast. In addition to legal services, we operate an Aboriginal Access Program, a Children's Court Assistance Scheme and a Cooperative Legal Services Delivery Program. We also provide community legal education throughout the Central Coast.

Central Coast CLC operates and functions on the lands of the Darkinyung people who are the traditional owners. The Central Coast is a region that is rich in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander culture with over 7,000 registered sites. Our region has the fastest growing population of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the country. With such a diverse and fast-growing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, it is vital that our local communities have a mechanism that enables them to come together and have a say on the implementation of programs, policies and services that directly affect them.

The Central Coast CLC is committed to the empowerment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Our Centre supports Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination and the proposed creation of an Indigenous Voice to Parliament to ensure that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a say on the policies, laws and services that impact them and their community.

We have read and support the submissions made by the Central Coast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community.

It is particularly important to the Central Coast CLC and our local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that the region has its own Regional Voice rather than being included in the Sydney or Newcastle regions. As the home to one of Australia's largest and growing nations for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, the Central Coast is geographically vast which creates unique challenges with the provision of services. Further, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population in the Central Coast region is young, with over 50% of the community being under the age of 24 years old. This makes the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in this area particularly vulnerable, with any disadvantageous laws or policies more likely to affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth and continue the cycle of intergenerational trauma. It is essential that the Central Coast Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities are able to express what

is needed and appropriate in their local area through a Regional Voice in addition to the National Voice to Parliament.

The Central Coast CLC recognise the opportunities that a recognised Voice to Parliament could create and are supportive of its establishment on both a regional and national level. We however remain extremely concerned that the proposed Voice to Parliament only addresses one element of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and specifically excludes constitutional reform and the formation of a Makarrata Commission. Without constitutional protection of such a fundamentally important issue, akin to the right to vote, we are concerned that a Voice to Parliament can be removed with a change of government. Therefore, it is our submission that a pathway to constitutional enshrinement of such Voice to Parliament must be a priority.

Yours faithfully

CENTRAL COAST COMMUNITY LEGAL CENTRE

Sym'mon Andrews
Principal Solicitor