

Jeremy Eccles

To Co-Design Body

Submission to Co-design process

I am UK-born but have lived in Australia since 1982 and have been increasingly engaged with First Nations cultures since 1985 when I attended a pan-tribal dance festival on Groote Eylandt. As a result of this growing appreciation and understanding, I have written hundreds of stories as a journalist, essays for magazines and a film for the ABC on aspects of the art, cultures and politics of this country's first peoples.

Why do you think the Uluru Statement from the Heart is important?

I am aware of the deterioration of conditions in many Indigenous communities and place much blame on the wilful destruction of Aboriginal societies by the colonial process. I therefore am convinced that a restoration of authority for the elders which should result from the Voice and truth-telling inherent in the Uluru Statement's acceptance is vital for our First Nations to be restored to their proper place in the Australian community.

How could a Voice to Parliament improve the lives of your community?

My cosy Sydney North Shore community may have a greater appreciation of distant First Nations cultures than when I first encountered them in 1985 - but there's a mighty way to go to genuine understanding.

Why do you think it's important to enshrine the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution, rather than include it only in legislation?

The mutability of political action regarding Indigenous Australia has been crazy. John Howard's Intervention is the most extreme example of governments not listening and acting for purely political results. With such waywardness as evidence, why would First Nations accept anything less than an immutable constitutional position in the country that they nurtured for 60,000 years?

Why is it important for Indigenous people to have a say in the matters that affect them?

How can any society or community retain its dignity when no one listens to it, but, instead, sends down streams of 'solutions' and meaningless money from Canberra?

Yours sincerely,
Jeremy Eccles