



# Indigenous Voice Co-Design process

Submission from MAX Solutions

# Indigenous Australian voice

**MAX Solutions is privileged to serve tens of thousands of Indigenous Australian customers around the country every year.**

We have a significant responsibility, as Australia's largest employment services provider, to help lead and foster a fairer future.

In the 1960s we saw the country come together to demand an end to the unequal treatment of Indigenous Australians, a movement that resulted in the most successful referendum we have ever held. While there have been improvements since that time, much remains to be done before Indigenous Australians have the same opportunities as other Australians.

Other important steps have been taken over the intervening years to build a more inclusive country. But it is now very apparent that further progress is contingent on a change of approach.

To that end, we wholeheartedly support proposals that empower and give greater voice to Indigenous people. We understand the need for legislation to create the mechanism for the voice to function, however we also understand the need to give protections to the voice. Which is why we support a referendum to recognise the voice of Indigenous Australians in the Constitution and we are proud to stand with Indigenous Australians in this defining 'movement towards a better future'.

When we listen to the voices of those that have suffered injustice, it is possible to not only recognise enduring harm. But to see a new strength and resolve to do better.

At the centre of change, there is always a voice finally empowered to be heard.

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* is both profoundly inspiring and sobering. A powerful vision for the future but also a reminder of the injustice that prevails when a people's voice is denied.



# Equality of employment opportunity

**As an employment services provider working with people from every walk of life, we know how transformative a meaningful job can be.**

We see this every day in our business and know that with a job comes stability, improved mental health, and opportunity. For both individuals and their dependents. Rewarding and sustainable work is immensely empowering and enfranchising. It is also of fundamental importance to creating a better, more equitable and prosperous future for our great nation.

Despite recent shocks, Australia's economy remains strong when compared to the rest of the world, with the national unemployment rate (5.6%) only marginally above pre-pandemic levels.

Nonetheless, it is important to note that the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians has improved by less than a percentage point over the last decade. Rising to 49% in 2020 compared to 75% of non-Indigenous Australians.

## Closing the employment gap

**Last year, MAX supported just over 4,800 Indigenous Australians into employment. We are proud to support so many customers but understand that there is more employment services providers and employers can do to further reduce inequity.**

In 2020, we surveyed our Indigenous customers and found that 50% of respondents said they expect employment opportunities to remain the same or decrease over the next three years. Just 25% expected an improvement.

When asked what types of workplace support our customers most valued, career development and cultural awareness were key factors. But perhaps the most significant theme to emerge was the value placed on good workplace communication.

We are currently working with large Australian employers to socialise and interpret these findings, as well as provide them with additional guidance on what does, and doesn't work, in terms of addressing employment gaps.

On top of this, we believe there would be significant societal benefit in having a Voice able to bring forward discussion from those most affected in areas where the gaps in opportunity and outcome are most pressing, including:

- > Young People
- > Elderly People
- > People with a Disability
- > People experiencing domestic violence
- > Unemployed people
- > Prisoners and ex-offenders

# The future

**Our analysis and conversations with employers indicate that the voice of Indigenous Australians in our nation's workplaces will strengthen over the next few years.**

More than 70% of the large employer partners we recently surveyed expect employment opportunities to increase for Indigenous Australians.

This is positive and is likely to reflect future hiring intent, with most businesses telling us they expect to increase the number of Indigenous Australians they employ in 2021. Unfortunately, there is not the same level of optimism amongst the Indigenous people we surveyed.

As an employer, MAX is also working hard to strengthen the voice of its own Indigenous Australian employees. Including through the establishment of our Independently Chaired Indigenous Advisory Committee which led development of our [Reconciliation Action Plan](#).

*Our Vision is "to build a strong Indigenous voice into our decision making in order to reflect the regions where we work and make an impact towards Closing the Gap in Indigenous employment and wellbeing."*

The MAX Indigenous Advisory structure provides a bottom-up model that gives voice to all Indigenous employees in each State and Territory, being chaired by MAX Indigenous employees and feeding into the National Indigenous Advisory Committee and the RAP Working Group which is chaired by the Chief Operating Officer.

This model ensures that concerns about policies, programs and services are captured locally and those concerns are fed both up and down through each of the respective committees.

Our early experience of this working model is.

1. Indigenous employees have a genuine seat and voice at the table.
2. Indigenous employees are empowered to contribute to policy, programs and services that impact their Indigenous customers.

We are conscious that much work remains to be done. But as a proud, equal opportunity employer and Australia's largest provider of employment services to Indigenous Australians, we are deeply committed to supporting a 'fuller expression of Australia's nationhood'.

We are happy to provide further assistance and expertise to the Indigenous Voice Co-Design process, as required.

**Deborah Homewood**  
Managing Director, MAX Solutions

**Sean Gordon**  
Chair of the Indigenous Advisory Committee

