

Indigenous Voice Submission

I am a third generation Scottish Australian. I love this country and feel privileged to live here. I grew up in country NSW and Queensland. I have worked in Education and with the NDIS program and am currently working with Mental Health First Aid. I am making this submission in the hope that real reform can be enacted and the First Peoples of Australia can be properly recognised and given the voice they deserve in this country.

The Uluru Statement of the Heart seeks constitutional reforms to empower First Nations Peoples to “take their rightful place in this country” and “calls for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.” It “seeks a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making between governments and First Nations and truth-telling about our history.”

This is long overdue. The First Peoples of this country have lived with autonomy and self-determination, within a complex set of social and political laws and customs, that have enabled them to successfully coexist for 60 000 years. Upon the arrival of white Australians this self-determination and autonomy was savagely compromised and First Nations’ laws and customs were decimated.

It is time to recognise the vital importance of allowing First Peoples to regain their voice in determining their own outcomes. To put them front and centre of decision making, so that no decision is made about them without them. White Australia cannot presuppose that it knows what is best for the First Peoples of Australia. This has been tragically

demonstrated time and time again in our short history of cohabitation in this country, and has left a shameful legacy of trauma and disenfranchisement.

I submit a request that a model for the First Peoples Voice is established and the Government honour its election promise to hold a referendum, to ensure that Voice is protected by the Constitution. And to pass enabling legislation for that Voice, once the referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament.

The membership model for the National Voice must ensure that previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as already established leadership figures.

If the Uluru Statement of the Heart is seriously given the respect and gravity it deserves it will be a big step toward reconciliation in Australia, and will allow us all to benefit from the ancient and long standing wisdom, knowledge and culture of our First Peoples. It will also begin real healing within First Peoples' communities and open the opportunity for a shared future that could unite Australia. This is something for us to honour and be proud of.