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To whom it may concern

Submission for Co-design process

I am a white lawyer and JP. I have a history of involvement in community organisations, including some dedicated to advancing the rights of Australia's indigenous people, going back as far as the 1980s.

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

Australia can never mature until it addresses its history, acknowledges truths and establishes structures and processes to ensure that the voices of indigenous people are heard.

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

Hearing the voices of indigenous people enriches all of us. After all, what is this country without its indigenous population? Undoubtedly acknowledging and respecting the cultures of our diverse ethnic communities has contributed greatly to our civilisation. By contrast, the painfully slow process of coming to understand and respect the cultures and practices of indigenous communities and how these are relevant to us today continues, every day, to hamper our maturity and standing as a nation.

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

There are three reasons: 1. This crucial and fundamental reform should not be relegated to mere legislation where it is vulnerable to amendment and repeal; 2. Such a vital reform deserves the symbolic act of amending the founding document of the nation; and 3. Given the troubled and often tragic history of all that has gone before, the coming together of the nation's voters to endorse this change is essential to give legitimacy and underscore the significance of the change of direction.

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

The challenges facing indigenous communities are many and varied. These challenges, the contributing factors and the consequences are not easily understood by anyone outside the communities. The solutions may be just as many and varied - and nuanced. These can only come from "inside" and, if not owned by the community, are destined to fail.

Kind regards,
Denis Matson