

[REDACTED]

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To whom it may concern

Submission for Co-design process

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We are a national non-profit organisation that creates professional pathways for First Nations students, from senior high school through to university. I manage our organisation's UNSW student cohort and our relationships with various community and business stakeholders. I am submitting this for my students, on the one hand, but moreso on my own behalf, as a non-Indigenous man, but a firm believer in the need to change the structural, historical inequalities that continue to limit large-scale community empathy for historical injustices against First Nations communities across Australia and recognition of the importance of community-led decision making and positive discrimination to inform those initial steps to Reconciliation and equality in the coming century.

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

Closing the Gap is not working through current mechanisms. Community-led decision-making will come with challenges, however it is the only way to truly empower the community and elected community leaders to strike down policies and programs that are only created and led from a non-Indigenous gaze. It will push the government to further collaborate with Indigenous communities, even when it is a difficult process, to ensure agreement is reached with the community leading on those issues that most directly impact them.

*Why do you think a Voice to Parliament is important?*

Parliament, as an evolving but nonetheless stable representation of Australia, has been unable to understand the plight and realities of First Nations communities because they have not taken the voice of the community seriously for much of the past century (when political gains have been made), have not known how to translate that voice, and will only succeed in understanding and empathising with community-led representation if that voice is enshrined and legitimised by the Uluru Statement.

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

Our First Nations communities have achieved all they have achieved because of their constant push to have more say, following centuries of that right taken away. If reconciliation and equality are still far from reality, which they are, then having MORE say is essential, part of the continuum of progressive empowerment that cannot stop, but must continue and must continue in new formats and structures. It is not a level-playing field in decision-making and the scales of impact are always tipped against Indigenous groups due to social and cultural factors that don't play a role in large-scale policy frameworks.

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

Perceived legitimacy, both on a legal and community level, for the Australian community to recognise the place of First Nations communities in Australia's present and future, because of its absence from constitutional recognition in the past. Australian society is notably reactionary to government leadership, and has only ever made progress in Australian politics and society following the 1967 Referendum. This is the next logical step to further Reconciliation.

Progress for Australia, in making it a modern country that celebrates ALL Australians and recognises the injustices of the past, was first made through constitutional change in 1967. It was foundational to set the scene for the Uluru Statement as the next manifestation and revolutionary step for reconciliation. Racism kept the Uluru Statement from being initially accepted - not overt, just generally shared sentiment within the government, I know this because I've heard [REDACTED] contradict his own philosophies when discussing why

he moved against it on behalf of the Coalition. Whoever makes this change will be remembered in history as being the enabler and the empowerer - don't miss this chance.

Yours sincerely,

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