

## **Submission to support the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution**

This land has been cared for and nurtured for thousands of years by First Nations people.

Colonisation and massacres have left intergenerational trauma for Aboriginal communities. Its devastating effect has been wide-spreading including mental health, high rate of family violence, youth detention and child protection and lower life expectancy. These negative effects have disempowered the peoples.

Interventions led by the Australian government such as those in the Northern Territory were disrespectful and highly unsuccessful as it did not listen to and respect the Voice of the First Nations people. It was based on wrong colonial beliefs which demonised the First Nations people as those who neglect their own people and children. How could the peoples who revere and protect Mother Earth and successfully care for their own peoples for thousands of years not love their children? Ill-informed interventions that do not uphold the First Nations Voice have led to people's sufferings and wasted public resources.

I therefore wholeheartedly support the Uluru Statement of the Heart which calls for the **Voice of the First Nations people be enshrined in the Constitution**. I also support the call to establish the Makarrata Commission to lead the truth telling and truth hearing process in order for justice and healing to take place with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. This process is paramount in order to right the wrong that generations of First Nations people have suffered. It is also to support self-determination and ensure First Nations people take their rightful place in this country.

I ask that the Australian Government undertake these three actions:

1. The government must honour its election commitment to a referendum once a model for the Voice has been settled;
2. Enabling legislation for the Voice must be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament; and
3. The membership model for the National Voice must ensure previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

To ensure it operates independently from government, the National Voice

1. must be enshrined in the Constitution so that it:
  - a. Cannot be unilaterally abolished by governments; and
  - b. Carries a powerful moral mandate from the Australian people through a historic referendum;

2. Have a membership that is determined by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, not appointments made by ministers or government;
3. Have sufficient and secure long-term operational funding, which includes ensuring there is sufficient financial capacity to be strongly accountable to the Regional and Local Voices; and
4. Have the capacity to independently commission and manage its own policy and legal advice, including from governments, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak organisations and service providers, and other experts.

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