

My parents arrived in Australia in 1938, refugees fleeing the terrible situation for Jews in Nazi Germany. They were so relieved and grateful to come to a country where they had the right to exist, to be safe and to fully participate in society.

But these democratic principles did not extend to Australia's First Nations peoples. In the land they had inhabited for over 60000 years their existence was so dire under colonial rule that they were not even included in the census. While some key issues have been addressed in the intervening years, tragically the devastating impact of dispossession and deep racism still persist, the final telling in the great discrepancy of life expectancy of indigenous compared with non-indigenous Australians.

At the root of this complex and shameful travesty is the lack of recognition from the first landing of white man. Unlike other countries that have been colonised by Europeans and against English protocol, no treaty has ever been made with any of the Australian First Nations peoples, nor has there been constitutional recognition. The land was simply occupied, leaving the First Australians alienated and powerless in their own country.

It is time to acknowledge and address this terrible inequity, just as the Germans did after World War 2. As long as we perpetuate this shocking injustice we carry the collective guilt of our forefathers. It weighs down the nation. Its divisiveness harms us all and our entire society in ways we have become so accustomed to we do not even recognise.

For me there is no option but to embrace the welcoming and inclusive invitation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. Therefore I support the following requests:

1. I urge the Federal Government to honour its 2019 electoral promise to take a model for a First Nations Voice to Parliament to a referendum now. This is not a matter that can be deferred any longer. Until the Voice is enshrined in the constitution it is fragile and dependent on political party agendas, as we have witnessed in the past.
2. I ask for legislation for the First Nations VOICE to be passed after the referendum in the next term of Parliament.
3. The National VOICE member model, must be a model that ensures ALL Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island grassroot voices are heard from every level.

This is the opportunity of our generations.

If not me (us) then who? If not now then when? (quote from Hillel the Elder)

Annette Guerry

The opportunity of our generations is to finally redress this terrible wrong. It is time to accept the invitation of the Uluru statement from the heart and reciprocate the inclusiveness it offers. It is time to fulfil the promise of two Prime Ministers, to give First Australians constitutional recognition and a Voice to Parliament in matters and policies that are about them. Without this we can never have a healthy and great nation.

(Not sure how to finish it.

I want to say something about how this blights us as a country in so many ways, that we will never have harmony while such discrimination exists and how we have all lost so much by spurning indigenous knowledge of land, culture, science and society)