

Voice Secretariat
Reply Paid 83380
CANBERRA ACT 2601

To Co-Design Body

Re: submission to co-design process

I am writing to offer my total support to a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Australia's Parliament. I'm a sustainable development research director at a university and have 20+ years working on water management, gender equality and inclusion and sustainability issues in Australia and internationally. I am writing from Sydney - country of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation, and I pay my respects to Elders past and present. The sovereignty of the land that I live on has never been ceded, it always has been, and always will be Aboriginal land. It is very painful to live in a country that doesn't recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty, and isn't making substantial steps to face and change past and current inequalities and injustices.

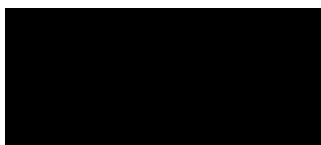
The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a gift from Indigenous peoples of Australia to us all. It lays out a practical, compassionate, realistic and inspiring future for our now shared country. The immense work that was put into co-creating the Statement was phenomenal, and the inclusive way it was devised must be honoured through implementation. It lays down a clear path for us to walk together and heal our nation.

It is essential that all matters that impact Indigenous people, are informed by Indigenous people. We have to adopt a "nothing about them without them" approach to policy making immediately. It is woeful, embarrassing and a breach of human rights commitments not to honour the right to self-determination. Indigenous people must have a Voice to Parliament (and in all other channels of society that influence lives and community). The Voice to Parliament must be enshrined in the constitution in order for it to have longevity, and legitimacy.

The Government must honour its commitment to a referendum to enshrine the Voice to Parliament once the model for the Voice has been designed and agreed upon by Indigenous people of Australia. This includes developing enabling legislation which must be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament. I also strongly believe that 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.

A constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament will improve my life, and the life of my community by having a more robust, fair, progressive and sustainable way to create policy and practice related to reconciliation and healing the wounds of our painful colonial past. I want Indigenous people to have the opportunity to lead matters that are important to all of us (and especially themselves), and this will make Australia a better country and place to live for the long term. I am proud to live in a country that has the oldest surviving culture - and all the riches of story, connection to country, art, music, intellect, poetry, thought, invention, relationships and innovation that this brings to us. We should treasure these gifts by ensuring that they have a place in our Parliaments, our hearts, and in our society at large.

Yours sincerely,



Melita Grant