

To Co-Design Body,

I am an Art History student from the University of Queensland and I write in response to the National Voice interim report and to support its three key positions. Unlike the usual eye-roll apathy I feel towards empty words and sycophantic lip-service blindly paid towards democratic structures, for the first time in my life I've felt the gravity, power, pride and hope that comes with living in a democracy, and a real sense of personal responsibility and the ability for my small words to make a difference. I find my heart jumping with joy and nodding in agreement with everything described in the interim report. In many decision-making situations that directly affect Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Voices are the ones that frustratingly are silenced and dismissed. This is often because the policy makers are not the end users. It is unfortunate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's issues have been tossed around like a political football, and the government often 'does things to' rather than with these communities. This is why I fully support the Uluru Statement. It is imperative for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to have a greater say in the laws of the Parliament, policies and Australian Government decisions that affect them.

I support the three key positions of the National Voice:

I hold the government accountable to honouring its election commitment to a referendum once a model for the Voice has been settled.

I urge the Government to enable legislation for the Voice to be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament.

I support a membership model for the National Voice that must ensure previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

It is an embarrassment that we do not have a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Australian constitution given the appalling history and treatment of First Nations peoples since the colonisation of Australia, and it is impossible for the Australian government and people to say that we live in a country based on equality, democracy and inclusivity if its First People continue to be systemically oppressed and disadvantaged.

Yours sincerely,

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The Voice is a turning point for the relationship between the Australian government, the Australian public, and First Nations People. The desire by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to have a greater say in the laws of the Parliament, policies and Australian Government decisions that affect them is a desire that I support as well. The design outlined in the report is how I envision Australia working at its best for its all its people. It is inspiring and uplifting because it is reasonable and **makes so much sense**. It makes sense for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to have a Voice in the laws of the Parliament, policies and Australian Government decisions that affect them. It makes sense to devise a system where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their communities can work in **true partnership with government**. It makes sense that “better outcomes are achieved when decisions that affect the daily lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are made as close of the ground as possible and in partnership with those most affected.” (Interim Report 2020 p,62).

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