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Submission for Co-design process

I was inspired to make this submission by the Uluru Statement from the Heart. The Uluru Statement from the Heart is important because it reflects an Indigenous designed and led deliberative process asking First Nations what meaningful constitutional recognition would be to them. This historic process resulted in the adoption of the Uluru Statement from the Heart in May 2017, which clarified that there is one proposal for recognition that has consensus support from First Nations Peoples: the constitutional enshrinement of a First Nations Voice to Parliament. This is the proposal that should be implemented.

It is critical for First Nations Peoples to have a meaningful say in the matters that affect them to address the legacy of dispossession, genocide, racism, injustice and disadvantage and to change Australia's appalling history of stolen generations and deaths in custody which continues today.

The most important reason for enshrining the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution is because it supports First Nations peoples' preferred model. Recognising First Nations People through a Voice to Parliament in the Constitution is an issue of fundamental importance to our nation and our national identity. It should therefore be reflected in our Constitution.

Importantly, a voice to Parliament will provide a path to improving the lives of First Nations Peoples. However, it will improve the lives of all Australians, by making Australia a more fair and equal country, and providing a way to start to address past and current injustices. It will provide a meaningful foundation to work towards closing the gap in health, economic and social outcomes and making a real difference to addressing the current disadvantage experienced by First Australians.

I hope this government will properly implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart and seize this critical opportunity to make real progress on closing the gap in health, employment, economic, social outcomes and create true equality for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

Yours sincerely  
Helen Townley