


John Houghton



To whom it may concern

Submission for Co-design process

I grew up in Europe, with a typical European, educated outlook. A year after migrating my wife and I became Australian citizens. We took our children out of school for a term to get to know more of the country we had joined. We were all most affected by our time in the Centre, which prompted our concern for the state of indigenous people in our new country. We joined and worked for ANTaR.

Why do you think the Uluru Statement from the Heart is important?

The consultative way in which it was achieved through the regional councils. The incredible achievement of such diverse delegates agreeing on such a positive, clear statement. The status it has achieved through being so immediately and insultingly rejected.

Why is it important for Indigenous people to have a say in the matters that affect them?

With incredible persistence change can be achieved and incorporated. For decades applicants were told 'Native Title' did not fit in Australian (English) law; but it eventually was recognised.

How could a Voice to Parliament improve the lives of your community?

I live in a predominantly non-aboriginal community. But one which is growing more and more respectful to the original owners of it. This widens and deepens the richness of living here. We are not just some kind of migrant birds perching on top.

Why do you think it's important to enshrine the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution, rather than include it only in legislation?

The security of it. It's locked in. The constitution is our ultimate reference.

At lower levels of official Australian government and management you can see the effects of agreements and constitutions. For example where local indigenous people are established as the majority on a Board. When visiting indigenous areas in the Northern Territory information used to be presented in the language 'They.....' Now with a legislated change the language is 'We welcome you. We.....'

Thank you,

John Houghton