

Ailsa Piper

[REDACTED], Watsons Bay. 2030

To whom it may concern,

I am not indigenous but I grew up on Yamatji country in WA, and now live on Gadigal land in NSW. I'm the fifth generation of my family to live in Australia, but my ancestors hail from England, Scotland and Ireland. I've worked as an actor, a director, a writer, a teacher and a broadcaster.

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

From the moment I first heard the statement read aloud, I knew that it was vital. I feel keenly that there are major issues that will never be resolved on this land without a powerful Indigenous voice to Parliament from Indigenous people. Obviously we need that voice for pressing issues like deaths in custody, but we urgently need it for climate policies, for education, for justice and new ways of applying it, for understanding of who we are and who we might be...We are still enacting that original violence that happened at settlement in so many ways. Our treatment of women, abuse of children, our drinking culture...we are all responsible for changing these scourges, and an indigenous voice to parliament will be a major step toward changing some of those toxic patterns that show up in every area of Australian life.

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

This question doesn't even deserve an answer. It doesn't deserve to exist. Why is it important for us to have representation of any kind? It is self-explanatory, and I find it offensive that Indigenous and non-Indigenous people should even have to think about explaining this to anyone. If we asked "Why is it important for citizens to have a say in the matters that affect them?" we would all laugh. The parliamentary represents its citizens. Indigenous people are citizens. End of story.

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

I am aware that every time I cross paths with an Indigenous teacher or friend, my world is expanded. I can only hope that a Voice to Parliament could be a healing force within the walls of a place that has become toxic and disrespected. If Parliament and its culture and thinking can be improved and made more dignified and decent, then my community and my experience will be too.

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

A Constitution declares who we are as a nation and a people. It is vital that Indigenous people and voices be represented in it - for our citizens, but also to show the world that finally we are maturing as a nation.

Yours sincerely,
Ailsa Piper