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To Co-Design Body

Submission to Co-design process

I am a fourth-generation Australian of Irish and Scottish descent. My people settled in the Flinders Ranges of South Australia. I now have a close connection with the Adnyamathanha people there. I treasure this relationship and feel blessed by the opportunity they have given me to understand their culture. I am in awe of their capacity to progress their communities, care for their families, provide for their futures and heal the damage of colonisation. We non-indigenous Australian have so much to learn from them.

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

The Uluru Statement demonstrates that all indigenous groups across this country can join together constructively to effectively negotiate sophisticated, complex and workable governance systems that are not only compatible with the current system of government in Australia but will have the capacity to address the complex policy issues which have created the intractable injustices for indigenous people in Australia. It shows that indigenous people and indigenous ways of thinking are more likely to find creative and workable solutions to close the gap. Indigenous people have so much to offer the rest of us, including massive cultural wealth and land management practices that can heal our damaged land.

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

They are competent adults. History has demonstrated that despite the best efforts of many people, our Constitution and system of government are not capable of addressing the issues that indigenous people face.

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

In every way. They think in ways that benefit the whole community. It is how they have survived 65,000 years in a harsh land.

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

Enshrining the Voice to Parliament in our Constitution will ensure that it is not weakened by future government policy or partisan politics.

Let us reflect on these wise words from Galarrwuy Yunupingu, current member of the Senior Advisory Group for an Indigenous Voice to Parliament, who said, 'What Aboriginal people ask is that the modern world now makes the sacrifices necessary to give us a real future. To relax its grip on us. To let us breathe, to let us be free of the determined control exerted on us to make us like you, And you should take that a step further and recognise who we are, not who you want us to be. Let us be who we are – Aboriginal people in a modern world – and be proud of us. Acknowledge that we have survived the worst that the past had thrown at us, and we are here with our songs, our ceremonies, our land, our language and our people – our full identity. What a gift this is that we can give you, if you choose to accept us in a meaningful way.' (Quoted in 'Deep Time Dreaming' by Billy Griffiths, Black Inc, 2018, p 172-173.)

Thank you,

