

To Co-Design Body

### **Submission for Co-design process**

I am a white male septuagenarian from complete English heritage. Although I now operate a very small but commercial vineyard, I am retired from a career in surveying, town planning, mediation, public sector property development and public administration. I have a Bachelor's degree in Surveying from UNSW, a Bachelor's degree in Arts (Regional Science) from MCAE, and a Master's degree in Public Administration from Macquarie University. My early career was in public service and my latter in private consulting practice. Heritage conservation has played a part in my career. My clients include a very pleasing association with the Awabakal Mob in Newcastle. I was born at Wagga Wagga, attended High School in Tamworth, Professional career in Orange, Sydney and Newcastle. I was the Earthquake Recovery Coordinator following the Newcastle Earthquake.

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

My very pleasing time with the Awabakal people in Newcastle showed that just like nations everywhere, there are also differences of opinion within indigenous communities, and it is usually termed "politics". Around the world, and particularly in a nation that is confronting a pandemic, climate change, marriage equality, overt recognition of a complex respect for the treatment of First Nations People and other matters where "politics" comes into play, it is rare that there can be a collaborative statement/agreement/outcome anything like the Uluru Statement from the Heart. It is a momentous communique that demonstrates how differences in hot spots around the world could be sufficiently resolved to be a platform for consensus and progress to a new ethos. It tops Australia's previously most amazing achievement of consensus - federation - where diversity was less complex.

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

I am a Captain of a NSW Rural Fire Service Brigade. The reasonably recent recognition of the efficacy of cultural cool burns, that First Nations people have practiced for millennia, is a very clear indicator that "white-man" practices imported from cool climate Europe to a hot dry country environment can benefit from listening to our indigenous knowledge holders. Our so-called sophisticated democracy demonstrates time after time that generalised one-size-fits-all outcomes are not beacons in the dominant social milieu of today's Australia. It might be harder for people living a culture arising from individual ownership to "hear" concepts arising from a culture arising from "Country", but if we are now hearing from indigenous experts in fire management, we should equally work harder to "hear" from a people who didn't evolve from a foreign industrialised ethos. But this has been said before - "when in Rome, do as the Romans do". So,

when advocating for Indigenous peoples, adapt one's thinking to do as the indigenous do, think and live, and that will be real listening.

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

If our response is to be anywhere near as momentous as was achieved at Uluru, or what was achieved at federation, it should enable our First Nations People to enter into a Constitution they would have been part of had imported European culture been as egalitarian as we like to portray ourselves today. Conversely, to squib at belated inclusion in the Constitution will clearly demonstrate that Australia is not yet the egalitarian society we like to portray.

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

It doesn't matter how much spin people want to put on the matter, First Nations people deserve respect for being first to populate our lands. Continuing to deny a real voice to the Parliament that they had no part in creating, and no original voice within, and no part in its written constitution, could only be explained by admitting that the issue is about current power and not about decency or fairness or our so-called egalitarian ethos. First Nations peoples have out-performed other diverse sectors of the Australian community by collectively agreeing, at the heart of our country, upon a momentous common understanding. Let us do the right thing. Recognise the voice from which it evolved within the Australian Constitution.

Thank you,

Brian Eastoe