

April 2021

The Hon. Scott Morrison MP  
Prime Minister  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Prime Minister

### **Uluru Statement from the Heart**

In am writing to you on behalf of the social work team at Australian Catholic University (ACU). The Uluru Statement from the Heart (Uluru Statement) was released on 26 May 2017 by delegates of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Referendum Convention, a convention process that was established with bipartisan support. The statement calls for a 'First Nations Voice' in the Constitution of Australia and a Makarrata Commission to supervise agreement-making and truth-telling between governments at all levels and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we are privileged to work and learn, and we pay respect to the First Nations Peoples and their Elders; past, present and future. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have invited universities to walk alongside them as they work towards the powerful and necessary objective of the Uluru Statement. We wholeheartedly accept this invitation with humility, and respect, so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can take their rightful place in this nation.

As social workers, we are determined to be part of a future that actively seeks social justice for all. Australian social workers are bound by three core principles, one of them being social justice. As professionals who work to address social inequality, we are acutely aware of the material and real-life impacts of the disempowerment of First Nations' people. We are also acutely aware of the benefits of recognition and full participation of first Nations' in affairs that impact them directly.

We believe that a permanent institution is necessary for First Nations' views to be recognised and heard in parliament, and for First Nations' people to have a platform to express important issues affecting them. We believe that constitutional recognition and the idea of a Voice to parliament are intimately tied together, and cannot be separated, for true justice to take place.

We respectfully suggest that the following process would achieve effective Constitutional recognition. Once a model is settled, then a referendum on the Voice should occur. Immediately following a “Yes” vote in the referendum, Parliament would then formalise the design and procedures of the First Nations’ Voice with enabling legislation. The requests put forward by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders in the Uluru Statement provide an opportunity for Australia to acknowledge our difficult history and move forward together in a genuine process of reconciliation. We further support the requests put forth that the Voice allow for contribution and participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders from diverse backgrounds, and not just the voices of established leadership figures. This latter request will help ensure that the Voice is representative of the ever-evolving needs of all Indigenous peoples.

The Uluru Statement is a necessary step to ensure justice for First Nation people. We believe that First Nations Voice should be protected and listened to, to benefit current and future generations. We stand in solidarity with and for a constitutional enshrinement of a First Nations Voice.

The time has come. We respectfully request that you support any motion brought to the Parliament that establishes a referendum on this issue.

Yours Sincerely

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