

To whom it may concern

Submission to Co-design process

I'm from Carlton, Melbourne and I work at Gilbert + Tobin, a firm in Melbourne. I've had a passion for constitutional law and constitutional design since I was at Uni.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a historic moment in Australia's constitutional development. It is the first continent-wide effort to have an Indigenous voice inserted into how our national institutions . More importantly, it provides an Indigenous design on what that Indigenous voice looks like. Along with the important Treaty and Truth elements, the Indigenous voice to Parliament will be a step to make sure that the First Australians have a meaningful (and deserved) role in Australia.

For the last nearly 250 years, Indigenous Australians have been at best ignored, and at worst terrorised, by the settler institutions which come to dominate Australian society. However well-meaning any policy is , we will never build an equitable society which serves Indigenous Australians fairly unless we listen to Indigenous Australians, rather than talk at Indigenous Australians.

Melbourne has a disproportionately low Indigenous population compared to Australia generally, as does Victoria generally. It is easy for Melburnians to push the experience of Indigenous Australians out of sight and out of mind. It's also easy to trivialise and compartmentalise issues of Indigenous Policy. A voice to parliament would make sure that our MPs, and our policy agenda, grappled with Indigenous issues as a constant reality.

Like ATSIC before it, the Voice to Parliament cannot be at the whim of any Parliament. In order to be a truly vital institution, and to make an earnest commitment to the project, Australians must be prepared to give constitutional protection to the body. Legislation will be necessary to shape the voice, and address any issues as it develops into an institution, but we must commit as a society to retaining it.

This project is an exciting opportunity for Australia. All Australians should be behind the Uluru statement - voice, treaty and truth. Australia's engagement with its First People is not a matter of apologies and colonies - it is not the past. Building a fair, equitable society with righteous institutions is a question for now, and the Uluru Statement is our chance to do that together.

Thank you,

Gus Viola

