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### **Subject: Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process**

We, the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus (the 'Jesuits'), and the many lay companions who work and volunteer across our ministries and works are called especially to serve, accompany, work with and advocate for people on the margins—those who are ignored or forgotten by the rest of society. Our work in service of this mission takes us to the frontiers of our world, here and abroad. The places where cultures meet and where new enterprises are launched and ideas are debated.

Our social ministries and initiatives in Australia include: [Jesuit Social Services](#); [Jesuit Mission Australia](#); [Jesuit Refugee Service Australia](#), [The Cardoner Project](#) and [The Bookends Project](#).

Education of young people in our schools, and our tertiary institutions, includes a desire to ensure we live faith and justice and develop a sense within the young to create a better and more just world.

The Bookends Project is just one initiative of the Australian Jesuit Province which expresses commitment to justice for Australia's First Nations peoples and for the country's most recent arrivals, refugees and people seeking asylum. The 'bookends' symbolise the intention of the project; to 'bookend' that which disconnects us from a fair and truthful relationship to these communities and their rights to unmediated dignity, justice, and reconciliation.

The five-year Apostolic Plan of the Australian Jesuits, 2019-2024: *A Call to Mission in Hope*, identifies five priorities. The second of these is to "heal humanity and our world". By this priority, we are called, amongst other things to heal the 'bookends' of our nation's story, to make a definite commitment to our ongoing need for reconciliation with our First Nations peoples while accompanying and advocating for refugees and people seeking asylum.

This can only be achieved by a deeper listening to the voices of First Nations' peoples.

## Our Submission

As a Non-Indigenous organisation, The Australian Province of the Society of Jesus aims to stand in solidarity with First Nations organisations, communities, groups, and individuals, whose minds and voices will continue to define the shape and process by which an Indigenous Voice to Parliament and to our nation can be heard.

We are honoured that an Australian Jesuit, Father Frank Brennan SJ, is one of three non-Indigenous Australians invited to serve on the 18-member Senior Advisory Group chaired by Marcia Langton and Tom Calma, to propose a design for the Indigenous Voice.

The Jesuits believe that, as a nation, we are still coming to terms with the consequences of invasion, settlement, and exclusion of Indigenous Australians. In contemporary Australia, displacement, dispossession and detention continue to block that justice where it is needed most. Trauma is inter-generational and requires serious action for true healing.

We seek to stand in solidarity with First Nations peoples and to take *The Uluru Statement from the Heart* seriously. It is an articulation of the First Nations experience in this country, and the pursuit of self-determination.

We support the National Voice, and most importantly, we support the call for a Local and Regional Voice Indigenous framework so that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in every community have a greater say in public policy, programs and service delivery affecting their lives through shared decision making in partnership with all levels of government.

The Jesuits in Australia seek to be converted, to be changed, to be renewed into a deeper and more just companionship with Australia's First Nations peoples. This submission is made in accordance with our Apostolic Plan and in keeping with a united call to mission with a 'faith that does justice' that is now urgently needed within this land.

Yours sincerely

**Fr Quyen Vu**  
**Provincial of the Australian Province of the Society of Jesus**