

Submission to the Australian Government in response to the Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process interim report January 2021.

For too long Aboriginal voices have been suppressed and silenced by successive generations of government. The time has come for this government to concede the right of the peoples of the First Nations of this country to enshrine their Voice in the Constitution of Australia.

Increasingly Australians are supporting changing the Constitution to provide for a First Nations' people's Voice to Parliament. In the 2019 election this government promised a referendum during its first term. This promise is broken. When the model for the Voice has been decided, this government must honour its commitment to hold a referendum to enshrine the Voice of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders peoples.

The referendum must now be held in the next term of Parliament, following which legislation for enshrining the Voice must be passed. The words for amending the Constitution need to be submitted to the Australian people at the referendum. Following completion of the Voice Co-Design Final Report the Australian public will need to see and consider details of the Voice prior to a referendum. The legislative design of the Voice must not be able to be separated from its constitutional enshrinement.

Restricting the membership for the National Voice to 18 as proposed in the interim Voice Co-Design Report would be ineffective. The Joint Selection Committee supported that a Voice should be legitimate and credible among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in local and regional communities; effective in advancing self-determination and positive outcomes for those communities and capable of achieving the support of the majority of Australians. There must be adequate provision for frontline and community representatives from all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, including those from Remote and Regional areas, to be directly involved in making decisions concerning their communities at a National level.

A Voice enshrined in the Constitution is fair and practical and supported by most Australians and will unify the whole Nation. I make this submission in response to the Interim Voice Co-Design Report.