

Re: Submission to Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process Interim Report – Australian Government

I am pleased to contribute my support to the public consultation to work out how the Indigenous Voice to Parliament will be shaped.

Coming from a counselling background (I am a non-Indigenous Australian of senior years), I am deeply aware of the human need to be truly listened to in order to make progress towards greater well-being and deep healing. As part of Australia's commitment (however flawed it has been) to continue addressing the huge need to redress the wrongs done to Indigenous Australians in the past, this proposed Voice to Parliament will be a major step forward – because that is what Indigenous Australians are asking for; and it is what is at the core of the uplifting and powerful Uluru Statement from the Heart. I am therefore encouraged that the Government is moving forward on this through the consultative process underway.

I am unable to make practical suggestions on how the Voice should work, but urge the Government to follow the recommendations of the co-design research teams working on that question. What is essential is that provision for such a Voice be written into the Constitution so that it will be guaranteed, and not subject to change according to whatever Party is in Government.

When details of how the Voice will work are decided, the Government must abide by its election commitment to give all Australians a voice through a referendum on this matter. Following that step, it would be important that the Government pass enabling legislation for the Voice to act, and to do that within the next term of Parliament. A further requisite of the composition of the Voice – as desired by Indigenous Australians and others – is that membership of 'the Voice' would include not just the same well-known public figures, but other Indigenous Australians not heard before.

I greatly appreciate the work being done on this 'Voice to Parliament' by all those on the co-design teams, as well as Government-enabling of this whole process. If this Voice can be brought into being, and active operation without delay, it will be for the good, not only of Indigenous Australians, but of the entire Australian people.

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