

Luke Whittington- Submission to the Voice Codesign Process

My name is Luke Whittington. I live in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney, on the lands of the Gundungurra and Dharug people. This is my submission to the Voice Codesign process in response to the Indigenous Voice Discussion Paper.

I support three main points in this submission.

1. The government must honour its election commitment to a referendum once a model for the Voice has been settled;
2. Enabling legislation for the Voice must be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament; and
3. The membership model for the National Voice must ensure previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures

I support these three points because they accord with the values that I support - that of fairness, democracy and justice. Above all I believe and support the view that a Voice to Parliament should be enshrined in the Australian Constitution because it is a fair and practical reform that will have a real impact on the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

It is clear that the challenges facing many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are intergenerational. It is right that there is a Voice that can withstand the changes of short-term electoral cycles and changes in policy. Previous voices have been vulnerable to abolition by governments, but the challenges remain. Constitutional backing for a Voice gives it the certainty and continuity needed to make real, long-term change in communities.

I am also excited by the prospect that a successful referendum to enshrine a Voice will be a historic and unifying moment for our nation.

Support for the Uluru Statement

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples came together to create the Uluru Statement from the Heart in 2017, and since then the Statement has been taken to all corners of the continent. A copy of it hangs in my children's school. In the Uluru Statement from the Heart, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people invited us to walk with them towards justice.

The words in the Statement struck me very deeply. As the Statement says:

“We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take *a rightful* place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We leave base camp and start our trek across this vast country. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future.”

I hope that we can all accept that invitation, and enshrine a Voice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the Constitution of this nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission.

Luke Whittington

Springwood, NSW

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