



The Cottage School  
4-10 Queen St, Bellerive TAS 7018

30 April 2021

Voice Secretariat  
National Indigenous Australians Agency  
Charles Perkins House  
16 Bowes Pl  
Phillip ACT 2606

Subject: The Cottage School submission on the Indigenous Voice Co-Design process

Dear Sir/Madam,

The Cottage School is a small community of learners that sits on the land of the Muwinina people on the eastern shore of nipaluna / Hobart. We provide a holistic education in a nurturing environment. The philosophy of the school encourages its community to active participation as socially and environmentally aware citizens. First Nations history and culture is embedded across our curriculum and we regularly engage with local First Nations groups. The school is committed to learning that embraces the interconnectedness of all life and we believe there is much to be learnt from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples that would benefit all Australians.

The Cottage School community would like to stand with Australia's First Nations people in their quest for a voice to Parliament and the Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making and truth telling, as laid out in the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We gratefully accept the invitation to walk with First Nations people "in a movement of the Australian people for a better future" and we wholeheartedly support the enshrinement of a First Nations Voice in the Australian Constitution as a critical step in the long journey towards equity and a shared identity.

The Constitution ignores the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples prior to European settlement. We believe that it is time for the Australian Constitution to honour our Indigenous history, honour the land that was never ceded and to enshrine the First Nations Voice in the Constitution. The Cottage School has recently committed to engage with Reconciliation Australia and to take action on Reconciliation. We believe that fundamental to Reconciliation is the recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in our nation's founding document, as the 'the oldest continuing cultures in human history'.

Recognition of First Nations peoples in the Constitution has the potential to make significant progress towards overcoming Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander disadvantage and move Australia closer to Reconciliation by:

- addressing a history of exclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the life of the nation;
- improving the sense of self-worth and social and emotional well-being of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples both as individuals, communities and as part of the national identity;
- enshrining the principles of non-discrimination in to our Constitution;
- providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a voice in laws that affect them;
- changing the context in which debates about the challenges faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities take place; and
- building positive relationships based on trust and mutual respect between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and the broader Australian community.

Constitutional reform will affect all Australians. At its core, recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Constitution is about building nationhood. An Australia based on respect for the dignity and humanity of our First Nations Peoples is something to which all Australians should strive. This process will encourage all Australians to examine what it means to be Australian and the rightful place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the sovereign custodians of this land.

The Cottage School supports the Uluru Statement from the Heart and request that Australia commence the journey to Voice, Treaty and Truth.

Regards,

Dr Kate Cashman

President

Ph: [REDACTED]