

Dear Co-Design Body

Submission to Co-design process

I don't identify as an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander person but I grew up partly in Melbourne and then moved up to Brisbane. I studied a Bachelor of International Business at QUT and am currently working at The University of Queensland in the Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Indigenous Engagement).

*Why do you think the Uluru Statement from the Heart is important?*

I believe that the Uluru Statement from the Heart is important as Indigenous people need a say in matters that concern them and they need to be listened to. Just like Queenslanders don't know all the laws that are applicable if they visit NSW, so too, Indigenous laws are different in each area so each area must be consulted and represented when laws are being made. Growing up in the Australian education system over 45 years ago, we weren't taught at school the truth of what happened to Indigenous people and it is so important especially for youngsters to be informed of the truth of what happened to Indigenous people when their land was invaded. When told the truth, one has a better understanding.

*Why do you think it's important to enshrine the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution, rather than include it only in legislation?*

It is essential to enshrine the Voice to Parliament in the Constitution so that the Commonwealth and States are in majority agreement and all politicians are bound by the constitution so no rogue party or representative will make decisions relating to Indigenous people, it will need to be agreed by all and not just the Government in office. When the Constitution was originally established, it did not take into account the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People and this needs to change. They have the right to be represented in Parliament and to make laws and policies relating specifically to Indigenous matters but also to advise on non-Indigenous matters just as it has been done in the reverse for so many years. It would allow them to have a stronger presence to enforce laws on matters concerning their Peoples. It is not right to only have a consultative advisory group to the Government as this is not representative of all Indigenous Communities and the advice would be only that and not law to be enforced if the Government chooses not to enforce it. The Voice to Parliament must be protected in the Constitution and not be overtaken by an opposing Government. A referendum is needed first and then legislation for the Voice to Parliament should be passed.

*Why is it important for Indigenous people to have a say in the matters that affect them?*

It is important for Indigenous people to have a say in the matters that affect them as they have a deeper understanding of these matters occurring in their communities and would have more control over outcomes. It would definitely be harder for Government to deny regulations that are clearly needed and sought by Indigenous People. The Indigenous People are the experts in Indigenous matters just like lawyers are experts in legal matters.

*How could a Voice to Parliament improve the lives of your community?*

The wishes of Indigenous People can be heard and outcomes can be improved for Indigenous People as they will be managed by Indigenous People who know and understand their communities. A Voice to Parliament is what all Indigenous People asked for so if it does happen then they will be accountable for what happens in the lives of Indigenous people in the community.

I am in full support of a First Nations Voice to Parliament, enshrined in the constitution.

Yours sincerely,  
Catherine Thompson

