



The Hon Linda Burney MP
Minister for Indigenous Australians

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Dear Margaret Margaret

Thank you for writing to me. I appreciate the time you have taken to get in touch.

I would like to start by thanking you for your congratulations. It is wonderful to hear Catholics in Coalition are engaging in conversations around the important topic of the Voice.

Now that the Bill has passed, we are one step closer to finally recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in our nation's founding document. I am heartened to hear of your support for the Voice, and encourage you to continue engaging on these issues to advance reconciliation and improve outcomes for First Nations peoples.

The 2023 referendum will give us the opportunity to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in our Constitution through a Voice.

The Voice is about two things: recognition and listening. Recognition of 65,000 years of continuous connection to land by First Nations people in our country's birth certificate. Listening to grassroots solutions to help Close the Gap and improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The 2023 referendum will be a unifying moment – it's about taking Australia forward, for everyone. This is the best chance we have had to address the injustices of the past and create change that will deliver a better future. The Voice will help bring about practical change by providing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people with a direct line of advice to the Australian Parliament and Government. For too long governments of different political persuasions have made policies *for* Indigenous Australians, not *with* Indigenous Australians.

Constitutional recognition through a Voice will mean doing things differently. It is about listening to grassroots people and making a practical difference in health, education, justice and jobs.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have a life expectancy around nine years less than non-Indigenous Australians. The gaps in life outcomes are unacceptable in a country like Australia. More of the same isn't good enough.

The Voice will be an independent, representative, advisory body for First Nations people. It will mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from cities, regions and remote areas across Australia will be able to speak directly to Government.

Establishing a Voice in the Constitution means that when Governments change, the Voice will remain. Laying the groundwork for better programs and policies that will make a long-term difference. After meetings across the country, the Uluru Statement from the Heart was written in 2017. This marked the largest First Nations consensus on the way forward in this country. The Uluru Statement asked for constitutional recognition through a Voice. Part of the Uluru Statement reads:

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.

The vast majority of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians support the 2023 referendum. Recent surveys show more than 80 per cent of First Nations people support recognition through a Voice.

The proposed amendment to the Constitution is legally sound. The Solicitor General's advice states that:

The proposed amendment is not only compatible with the system of representative and responsible government established under the Constitution, but it enhances that system.

You can help make the referendum a success by talking to people you know and your local community about the practical difference a Voice will make. More information, including the wording of the referendum question, constitutional amendment and the design principles, is available at voice.gov.au. I have included some additional information with this letter. You can also subscribe for regular updates.

The Yes23 (yes23.com.au) and the Uluru Dialogue (ulurustatement.org) websites also have information about campaigns to support recognition through a Voice.

Again, thank you for your support. Together we can make this change a reality.

Yours sincerely



The Hon LINDA BURNEY MP
Minister for Indigenous Australians

25/07/2023

Excellent feedback
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Encl (1) *Information Booklet - Recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples through a Voice*