

June 2018

Co-Chairs Senator Patrick Dodson and Mr Julian Leeser MP
Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition
Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
PO Box 6021, Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 2018

Dear Senator Dodson and Mr Leeser,

The NSW Reconciliation Council and twenty one Local Reconciliation Groups around NSW express our support for constitutional reform so that our nation's guiding document acknowledges and affirms the unique rights and position of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia.

The NSW Reconciliation Council supports the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and the recommendations of the Referendum Council.

The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* grew out of dialogues around the country and represents a united, national Indigenous position on a constitutional reform agenda. This is historically unprecedented.¹

A constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament and an extra-constitutional Declaration of Recognition in all Australian Parliaments will address the unmet and pressing need for First Australians to have a voice in the policies and decisions that govern their lives.

They provide a clear and practical path forward for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination in accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

They represent the reasonable aspirations of First Australians following the largest consultation process ever undertaken with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and are supported by a majority of Australians.²

We stand with the 90 per cent of Australians who believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people should have a voice in the matters that affect them and who believe that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold a unique place as the First Australians.³

The NSW Reconciliation Council also supports a formal agreement making and truth telling process through a Makarrata Commission. Truth telling is critical to raising public awareness

¹ Morris, Shireen (2018) *The Uluru Statement from the Heart: Australia's Greatest Moral Challenge* <<http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2018/03/07/4813237.htm>>

² Wahlquist, Calla (2017) *Most Australians support Indigenous voice to parliament plan that Turnbull rejected*, Guardian Australia, accessible at <<https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2017/oct/30/most-australians-support-indigenous-voice-to-parliament-plan-that-turnbull-rejected>>

³ Reconciliation Australia (2016) *Australian Reconciliation Barometer*, accessible at <https://www.reconciliation.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/RA_ARB-2016_-Full-report_FINAL-1.pdf>

of the need for constitutional reform, to improving civic understanding of our nation's history, and to recognising Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty.

In the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, Indigenous people invited non-Indigenous Australians to: "... walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future."⁴

Constitutional reform will be an important affirmation of Australia's recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander self-determination, and an essential step in our nation's reconciliation journey.

Kind regards,



Professor Lindon Coombes
Co-Chair NSW Reconciliation Council



Cecilia Anthony
Co-Chair NSW Reconciliation Council

NSW Local Reconciliation Group signatories to this submission:

1. Aboriginal Support Group - Manly Warringah Pittwater
2. ANTaR Armidale
3. ANTaR Inner West
4. Bennelong Reconciliation Group
5. Blue Mountains People For Reconciliation
6. Friends of Myall Creek Memorial
7. Harbour to Hawkesbury Australians for Reconciliation
8. Hornsby Area Residents for Reconciliation
9. Inverell Reconciliation Group
10. Lane Cove Residents for Reconciliation
11. Moree Reconciliation Group

⁴ <https://www.referendumcouncil.org.au/sites/default/files/2017-05/Uluru_Statement_From_The_Heart_0.PDF>



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14. North Illawarra Reconciliation & Treaty Group
15. Galari-Lachlan Reconciliation Group
16. Reconciliation Network: Northern Sydney Region
17. Sisters for Reconciliation (Northern Rivers)
18. Sutherland Shire Reconciliation Group
19. Winga Myamly Reconciliation Group
20. Wingecarribee Reconciliation Group INC
21. Women's Reconciliation Network