



National Indigenous Australians Agency
Commonwealth Government
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: National Indigenous Voice Submission

The Uniting Church in Australia in covenant relationship with the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress recognised the Sovereignty of First Nations Peoples in 2018 at its triennial meeting, the 15th National Assembly. At this same meeting the UCA affirmed the 'Statement from the Heart'.

We write this submission to affirm that the way forward for our nation is found in the fundamental and primary request of the Constitutional Convention held in 2017 at Uluru, this being the constitutional enshrinement of a National Voice to the Parliament. Therefore, we reject the co-design group's proposal which seeks to legislate a National Voice. This would leave the National Voice subject to legislative processes, which has been the case in the past, and could easily result in a change to, or the removal of the National Voice altogether. Further it wrongly connects the National Voice with the Government rather than the important independent position of a Voice to the Parliament.

The First Nations leaders in our Church have clearly said that the design and structure of membership for a constitutionally enshrined National Voice needs to ensure all 'voices' are heard, that is local, regional, state and territory which inform the National Voice.

We are opposed to a separate 'policy group' on the grounds it diminishes the National Voice and is open to confusion between two groups and even conflict. On the matter of terms for people serving on a constitutionally enshrined National Voice, First Nations leaders support 3-year rotating terms with a maximum of two terms, affording consistency and ensuring equity.

We believe other aspects of the co-design proposal can be discussed when it is clear the National Voice will be constitutionally enshrined.

We see the position we hold on the National Voice as being entirely consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, affirmed by the Australian Government in 2009.

We thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.

National President
Uniting Church in Australia

National Chairperson (Interim)
Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress

30th March 2021