



Central Australian
Aboriginal Congress
ABORIGINAL CORPORATION | ICN 7823

Submission to the
National Indigenous Australians' Agency
Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process
April 2021

The position of Central Australian Aboriginal Congress (Congress) regarding the establishment of a National Indigenous Voice is as follows.

1. Congress welcomes this opportunity to provide input into the work of the National Indigenous Voice Co-Design Group, the Local & Regional Co-design Group, and the Senior Advisory Group. We also note that terms of reference of these groups specifically excludes consideration of constitutional reform.
2. Despite this, Congress expresses its continued strong support for the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* and its recommendations regarding the establishment of a constitutionally enshrined 'Voice to Parliament' alongside a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making and truth-telling. In our view, the *Uluru Statement from the Heart* has the strong support of the Aboriginal communities that we serve.
3. Accordingly, we call for the establishment of a National Voice to the Australian Federal Parliament that is established through a referendum and enshrined in the Australian Constitution.
4. A constitutionally enshrined national representative body would:
 - a. give effect to our rights to self-determination as recognised under international agreements to which Australia is a signatory, including the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*¹.
 - b. establish genuine and continued representation of our First Peoples in the political and policy-making process and provide the overarching framework within which the health of our peoples may be addressed.
5. As recognised in the *Uluru Statement from the Heart*, such substantive structural change is required given the ongoing burden of poverty, discrimination and ill-health that our people continue to bear. Unfortunately, the Co-Design proposals contain no commitment to substantive, structural change.
6. Nationally and internationally, the Black Lives Matter campaigns and the renewed focus on Aboriginal deaths in custody suggest that this is not a time

**Central Australian Aboriginal Congress
Aboriginal Corporation**

ABN 76 210 591 710 | ICN 7823
PO Box 1604, Alice Springs NT 0871
(08) 8951 4400 | www.caac.org.au

**Aboriginal health
in Aboriginal hands.**

for compromise on the rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to health and justice.

7. We also recognise that Aboriginal community-controlled organisations have made significant gains through the negotiation of the new *National Agreement on Closing the Gap*. The Co-Design proposals risk undermining the Coalition of Peaks as a vehicle for self-determination and progress at this time.
8. We note that Prime Minister Scott Morrison, in speaking of constitutional recognition in May 2019, committed his government to “work together across the aisle and across our communities to get an outcome that all Australians can get behind and we'll take as long as is needed to achieve that”². We urge the Prime Minister to deliver on this commitment.

¹ United Nations. *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*. 2007; Available from: <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html>

² Snow D 2019 *Morrison pledges recognition but will take 'as long as needed'*. *Sydney Morning Herald* 19 May 2019; Available from: <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/morrison-pledges-recognition-but-will-take-as-long-as-needed-20190526-p51r80.html>