

24 September 2018

Australian Unity

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

Australian Unity is a 178-year old mutual organisation, providing a range of health, care and financial services to our 280,000 members, more than one million customers and to the broader community. We offer our submission to the Committee from the perspective of a company that proudly provides specialty services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander clients, and employs more than 300 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Australian Unity affirms our support for all the recommendations outlined in the Uluru Statement 'Statement from the Heart' in May 2017.

We consider the process of participation and consultation that culminated in the national gathering at Uluru on the 50th Anniversary of the 1967 Referendum as one of the most significant democratic acts in Australia since the founding of our Federation. Our antecedent organisation the Australian Natives' Association, played an important role in promoting and realising the Federation.

In the spirit of the Uluru Statement, we acknowledge the important gift offered to all Australians by the Statement from the Heart. We encourage the Joint Standing Committee to support this act of reconciliation, or makarrata. Specifically, Australian Unity calls on the Joint Standing Committee to support:

1. Constitutional Entrenchment

- a. a constitutionally enshrined, Indigenous-led body that provides a voice to parliament
- b. that such an Indigenous-led body be provided with adequate resources to ensure local, regional and national representatives are able to genuinely inform the Australian parliament about policies and programmes that impact on Indigenous Australians

2. Process of Constitutional Recognition

- a. Provide a detailed plan and timetable for a referendum on the question of Constitutional Recognition
- b. Ensure the process is Indigenous-led and adequately resourced
- c. Support a Referendum being held within 12 months of the next federal election

3. Bi-Partisanship support:

- a. Encourage bi-partisan support on progressing Constitutional Recognition in line with the recommendations of the Uluru Statement

Australian Unity supports the previous statements of the Business Council of Australia, and as a member of the BCA's Indigenous Engagement Taskforce we recognise the importance of an Indigenous-led process to support the cultural integrity and representation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the process of meaningful recognition.

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