



Dear Community,

As a regional women's service, we are humbled to acknowledge the unique and invaluable stewardship of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as traditional custodians of our communities. We firmly believe that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have the right to be heard and their voices must be at the forefront of any decision-making process that impacts their lives, lands, and cultures. This letter is written in partnership and with deep respect, conversation and support from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community and team members.

We are supportive of the Voice to Parliament proposal as a significant step towards reconciliation and recognition of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's sovereignty, rights, and aspirations. We acknowledge that the current political system has systematically excluded the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and their voices and perspectives have been silenced. We believe that the establishment of a Voice to Parliament can change that and must change that.

However, we have reservations about the proposal's efficacy and sustainability if it does not include all voices of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from across Australia. We recognise that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not a homogenous group and encompass diverse cultures, languages, histories, and aspirations. Therefore, it is essential to ensure that the Voice to Parliament reflects the full diversity and complexity of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their communities, that a Voice to Parliament is listened to deeply and with great respect and leads Parliament beyond listening and towards meaningful action.

We acknowledge the intergenerational trauma and injustices that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have endured since colonisation, and we understand that this proposal alone cannot undo the damage done. Still, it can be a step towards justice, equity, and healing.

Therefore, we urge the government to consult with all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and communities, including those in remote and regional areas, to ensure that the proposal represents all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's voices, needs, and aspirations, including the diverse and different views of those not already embedded within government bodies and systems. We call for the government to provide the necessary resources, support, and infrastructure to make this proposal a reality and ensure its effectiveness and sustainability.

In conclusion, we affirm our support for the Voice to Parliament if it is inclusive and respectful of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's voices, cultures, and aspirations. We stand in solidarity with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and take lead from our community Elders. We continue to take every opportunity to listen, learn and amplify the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community members as unwavering allies. We call on the government to do the same and to prioritise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's right to self-determination, healing, and reconciliation.

Sincerely,
The Centre for Women & Co. Team

