

17 April 2023

Joint Select Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum  
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Dear Committee Members,

Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA) advocates for the Catholic Church's social service ministry and is the peak body for Catholic social service providers, including CatholicCares and Centacares in dioceses across the nation and providers such as Mackillop Family Services, Marist 180 and Jesuit Social Services.

CSSA support the intent of the 5th Plenary Council of Australia's statement *Reconciliation: Healing Wounds, Receiving Gifts*. We say sorry to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in and beyond the Church for the part played by the Church in the harm they have suffered. We embrace the *Uluru Statement of the Heart* as a generous invitation to walk with our indigenous brothers and sisters to continue working towards recognition, reconciliation, and justice.

Our network is committed to advocating for a fairer, more inclusive Australian society that reflects and supports the dignity, equality, and participation of all people. We believe that enshrining an Indigenous Voice to the Commonwealth Government in the Constitution is essential in achieving this vision.

Our position is supported by the principles of Catholic Social Teaching, most notably the tenet of Subsidiarity. Subsidiarity requires that decisions are made by the people closest and most affected by the issues and concerns of the community. We believe that having a permanent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative body, resourced to consider issues and provide advice to both the Parliament and the Executive Government, will lead to tangible improvements in the lives of some of our most vulnerable people.

Additionally, we are encouraged by the move by some state and territory governments, such as the South Australian Government, to create similar bodies in their jurisdictions.

CSSA offer our full support for the *Constitution Alteration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) Bill 2023* as written and urges the Joint Committee to recommend passage of the Bill without alteration.



**Francis Sullivan AO**  
Chair



**Monique Earsman**  
Executive Director

**The national network of  
Catholic social services**

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