



23 March 2023

Australia's major faith-based charitable service networks unite to support Voice to Parliament

“We are deeply committed to a civil society and a world of justice, hope and fairness”

Leaders from the six leading faith-based social services charities are urging support of an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament to be embedded in the Constitution, as originally proposed in the Uluru Statement from the Heart.

In a co-signed open [letter](#) to Federal Parliament, The Salvation Army, Anglicare Australia, Baptist Care Australia, Catholic Social Services Australia, St Vincent de Paul Society and UnitingCare Australia urge the implementation of a Voice to Parliament in our Constitution which will give Indigenous communities a means to inform policy and legal decisions that impact their lives. It will also recognise and value the place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia's history.

The letter coincides with a Day of Engagement in Canberra on the issue, which includes meetings with MPs at Parliament House from 8am on Thursday, March 23.

The concept of a Voice to Parliament was presented to the nation five years ago on 26 May 2017, by delegates to the First Nations. The Uluru Statement from the Heart calls for:

“... the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution and a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making and truth-telling about our history.”

Further to the letter, leaders of the providers mentioned said the following:

Stuart Glover, Secretary for Mission, The Salvation Army Australia

“An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament represents both a powerfully symbolic and deeply practical step toward addressing the disadvantage and injustice experienced by First Nations people in Australia. A Voice will allow those in parliament to hear directly from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It will lead to better laws, better policy making and better outcomes.”

Nicole Hornsby, Executive Director, Baptist Care Australia

“Baptist Care Australia and our members work to build communities where every voice is heard and valued. As Baptists, we champion diversity of thought and believe the potential for First Nations' voices to be heard by Parliament provides a significant opportunity to progress Australia's walk together towards reconciliation.”

P. Toby oConnor, Chief Executive Officer, St Vincent de Paul Society National Council of Australia Inc

“An Indigenous Voice to Parliament will give Aboriginal Australians a voice in matters that affect them. The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia stands in solidarity with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people and is committed to walking with them to work towards recognition, reconciliation, and justice.”



Monique Earsman, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Australia

“CSSA stands with the Catholic community and other faith-based peak bodies in supporting a YES vote to enshrine an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. A YES vote will be a step towards a better and more just society where genuine reconciliation becomes possible,” Monique Earsman, Executive Director of Catholic Social Services Australia (CSSA).

Kasy Chambers, Executive Director, Anglicare Australia

“The Anglicare Australia Network has pledged our full support for a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

“With a referendum just months away, we will be doing everything in our power to make the case for the Yes campaign - amplifying First Nations voices, educating our own staff and clients, and campaigning publicly.

“We will also be there, alongside First Nations peoples, to persuade as many parliamentarians as possible are backing the Yes campaign within their parties and their communities.

“Our hope is that we can take this historic opportunity to walk alongside First Nations peoples and make the Voice a reality.”

Claerwen Little, National Director, UnitingCare Australia

“The Uniting Church in Australia, the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress, and UnitingCare Australia is deeply committed to justice for First Peoples. We support the Yes vote for the Voice as a pivotal step toward the full implementation of the Uluru Statement, so that as a nation we can finally confront the truth of our past and present and make way for justice”

ENDS

For more information, please contact The Salvation Army's Media Relations Department on (02) 94663143

You can view the Open Letter [here](#)

