



UNITED WORKERS UNION SUBMISSION:

Indigenous Voice and Co-Design Processes



“United Workers Union acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which we live and work. We pay respects to custodians, past, present, and emerging.”

Our Union

This submission is made by the members of the United Workers Union (UWU) First Nations Roundtable, which was formally established in February 2020.

The First Nations Roundtable provides an authoritative voice to direct and guide the union's campaigns related to justice, empowerment, organising, member activism and growth, and works in partnership with First Nations members and communities.

First Nations members of UWU work in healthcare, education, home and aged care, in mining and manufacturing and in Aboriginal organisations and communities. They - along with the broader membership of the UWU - support the Uluru Statement of the Heart, which was written to the Australian people.

In 2018, the 100 member strong National Council of our predecessor union, committed our union to walk with First Nations people on the path to Voice, Truth and Treaty. **Members passed the following resolution:**

National Council 2018: Statement from the heart

In May 2017, around 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people gathered at Uluru to hold an historic First Nations Convention. Arising from the Convention is the 'Statement from the Heart'. The Statement from the Heart conveys a powerful message "In 1967 we were counted, in 2017 we seek to be heard. We invite you to walk with us in a movement of the Australian people for a better future."

The statement calls for constitutional reform to enshrine a first nations voice in the Constitution. It calls for a Makarrata Commission to ensure a process of agreement making between Government and Indigenous Australians and provide a truth telling about Australia's history.

United Voice National Council commits to standing with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to support the Statement from the Heart'

United Voice condemns the Liberal-National government for rejecting the 'Statement from the Heart'.

The United Workers Union was formed in November 2019. In February 2020, the inaugural Member Council of the new union re-affirmed its commitment to the Statement of the Heart, again noting the importance of a voice enshrined in the constitution and the establishment of the Makarrata Commission.

Our submission

UWU First Nations Roundtable members welcome the Interim Indigenous Voice Co-Design Report provided to the federal government and appreciate an opportunity to comment on the recommendations.

Diversity

We believe the National Voice must be representative of the diverse populations and needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

We strongly support the emphasis within the Report that there will be continued commitment to national, local and regional consultation.

Representation

We reiterate the submission of *From the Heart* regarding National Voice representation which must be genuinely representative to ensure legitimacy, credibility and inclusion. The membership model must include previously unheard voices and ensure that all First Nations people have an opportunity to be selected.

It must be based on population distribution and need - and must give a greater proportional Voice to First Nations people living in remote and regional areas.

This should include an opportunity for frontline and community-focused people to be directly involved in national deliberations.

These issues of representation should be worked through in consultation with First Nations people and communities.

Independence

We believe a National Voice will set a path towards truth, treaty, justice and reconciliation.

A National Voice must not be a “third chamber” of the parliament. It must sit outside and operate and act independently with the authority to speak with out fear about policy and legislation impacting on First Nations people and communities. It must not deliver programs or services.

Constitutional Enshrinement

A National Voice will only be authoritative and independent if it is enshrined in the constitution. This is a threshold issue that must be addressed. History has shown that a Voice that is established by legislation can easily be taken away through future legislation.

The Uluru Statement called for a Voice that is **enshrined in the Constitution** – there is no mandate for a legislated voice **without constitutional reform**.

The federal government must honour its election commitment to a referendum once the model for the Voice has been settled.

Two Stage Process

We endorse the two-stage process to establish the Voice outlined in the submission of *From the Heart*. Enabling legislation must be passed **after** a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament.

Legislation must follow a referendum.

Majority Public Support

The Australian people strongly support a National Voice enshrined in the constitution. A majority would vote 'Yes' in a referendum with overwhelming support by First Nations people.

This support exists without a national education campaign – and would only be strengthened through a public campaign which would build awareness and have a unifying and positive impact across our community.

In addition to the above points, the UWW First Nations Roundtable wholeheartedly endorse the recommendations and submission of [From the Heart](#).

As proud trade union members we understand the importance of structures that enshrine our rights and enable us to exercise our voice, free from fear of reprisal.

We believe the federal government must implement all aspects of the Uluru Statement and maintain the commitment that was given to the Australian people for a referendum.

Submitted on behalf of the United Workers Union First Nations Roundtable

*Carol McCormack
Kenton Winsley
Mandy Dewey
Pam Honeysett
Kim Walton
Haidee Noonan
Brionee Noonan
Kay Gehan
Angela Beatson
Samantha Underwood
Therese Roe
Sarah Lui
Wayne Kurnoth and Wayne Costelloe, Co-Convenors*

**With the support of the National Executive of the United Workers Union
Jo Schofield, National President and Tim Kennedy, National Secretary**

**Please contact wayne.costelloe@unitedworkers.org.au
regarding any queries.**



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