



RACGP

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

31 March 2021

National Indigenous Australians Agency
Voice Secretariat
PO Box 2191
Canberra ACT 2600
Co-designVoice@niaa.gov.au

'Voice to Parliament' consultation

Dear Professors Langton and Calma,

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the government's Indigenous Voice Co-Design process, acknowledging the considerable work that has gone into the development of the proposals for a Voice to Parliament.

The RACGP is Australia's largest professional general practice organisation and represents over 41,000 urban, rural, and remote general practitioners. We are active and vocal advocates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health, supporting GPs to provide high-quality, culturally responsive, patient-centred healthcare. RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health (the faculty), established in 2010, now has more than 11,000 members who work and have an interest in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health.

The RACGP has long supported the campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander recognition in the Australian Constitution. In our [submission](#) to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 2018, the RACGP formally supported implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart. We did so for several reasons:

- it is important for the health of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, enabling a greater say in the development of policies and legislation which directly affect their health and wellbeing
- in recognition of the strong links between good health, wellbeing, and self-determination
- in response to support from our members and consistent with our longstanding commitment to the Close the Gap Campaign
- acknowledgement and respect of the extensive consultation process and consensus amongst communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representatives.

The RACGP maintains its support for implementation of the Uluru Statement from the Heart, inclusive of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the constitution and a process of agreement-making and truth telling through a Makarrata Commission. We believe that this is one of the most effective actions government can take to achieve the Closing the Gap targets.

We urge the government to honour its election commitment to hold a referendum once a model for the Voice to Parliament has been settled. These proposals outline important details on models for local, regional and national voice mechanisms but governments fail to describe a process for how the First Nations Voice will be enshrined in the Constitution – a fundamental aspect of the Uluru Statement.



RACGP

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health

A constitutionally enshrined mechanism confers legitimacy, authority and enables Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to actively participate in decision-making processes. As such, we believe constitutional change should come before a legislative solution.

While the RACGP does not take a specific position on the model of the Voice to Parliament, we strongly support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leadership of this process. Diversity of perspectives and support for a range of views amongst Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples is important. The membership model for the Voice to Parliament must ensure all interested Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

As a college, we are committed to reconciliation and to achieving our vision of a healthcare system free from racism and discrimination. It is in this spirit, that we continue to support the campaign to fully implement the Uluru Statement from the Heart processes for constitutional voice, treaty, and truth-telling. We encourage a timely and meaningful outcome on this longstanding issue.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process. For any enquiries regarding this submission, please contact Leanne Bird, Manager, RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health via leanne.bird@racgp.org.au or via (03) 8699 0313.

Yours sincerely

Dr Karen Price
President

Prof Peter O'Mara
Chair
RACGP Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health