

SUBMISSION COVER SHEET



**Submission to
Indigenous Voice Co-design Process Interim Report to the Australian
Government**

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Submission: Indigenous Voice Co-design Process Interim Report to the Australian Government

The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEUA) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the *Indigenous Voice Co-design Process Interim Report*.

Introduction

The IEUA is the federally registered union representing all employees in Catholic and other faith-based community and independent schools, early childhood education and care centres and post-secondary centres across all the states and territories of Australia. While the majority of IEUA members are teachers, the membership also includes employees engaged as teacher assistants, administrative staff, gardeners, cleaners and caterers. It has a current membership of approximately 75 000 members.

As a union with a strong and significant proportion of First Nation members, the IEUA has an active interest in the social and cultural environment in which schools and teachers operate and it is in this context that we make this submission.

The IEUA recognises that First Nation peoples have been present in Australia for over 65,000 years and their cultures have helped shape our national identity. Despite their enormous diversity and enduring presence on our continent First Nation peoples have had little voice in the decision-making processes that influence and govern our daily lives.

It is now time for this to change and the IEUA supports the mechanism of an Indigenous Voice that will provide a system in which First Nation people and their communities will be heard across all levels of government. Through this mechanism and the processes developed First Nation peoples will have the opportunity to achieve greater and more sustainable outcomes for their people across a wide range of areas.

As a union representing school staff, we understand the great impact improved education outcomes will have for First Nation peoples. At present we know First Nation students are over-represented among low achievers and under-represented among high achievers in national and international assessments.

The IEUA has long called for improved education outcomes for First Nation students and believe the Indigenous Voice is the way for this to be achieved.

Further, the IEUA strongly supports the Uluru Statement as the culmination of over two hundred years of debate and activism and believes it articulates the best and most appropriate way to advance the cause of reconciliation and ensure that our First Nations peoples are given full and equal opportunity to contribute to, and participate fully in, contemporary Australian life.

Conclusion

We firmly believe that the legislative design of the Voice cannot be decoupled from its constitutional enshrinement.

For this reason, it is essential that:

IEU – representing 75000 teachers, principals and ancillary staff in faith based, community and independent schools, pre-schools and early childhood centres and post secondary centres across Australia.

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1. The government honour its election commitment to a referendum once the model for the Voice has been settled;
2. Enabling legislation for the Voice be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament; and
3. The membership model for the National Voice must ensure previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance of being selected as established leadership figures.

We urge governments at all levels to support the process of constitutional enshrinement through commitment to these three essential steps and look forward to participating in further discussion as the co-design process continues.