



30 March 2021

Voice Secretariat

By email only: Co-designVoice@niaa.gov.au

Dear Committee Members

Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission in relation to the *Interim Report to the Australian Government: Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process*.

About QCOSS

The Queensland Council of Social Service (QCOSS) is the peak body for the social service sector in Queensland. Our vision is to achieve equality, opportunity and wellbeing for every person, in every community.

QCOSS' position

QCOSS supports the recommendations made by the From the Heart campaign in response to the *Interim Report to the Australian Government: Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process*. These include:

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

QCOSS strongly supports the development of a First Nations' Voice that is enshrined in the Constitution as defined in the Uluru Statement from the Heart ('the National Voice').

The National Voice must be enshrined in the Constitution so that it is not vulnerable to changes in government policy and perspective.

2. *Enabling legislation for the Voice must be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament.*

It is critical that enabling legislation for the Voice follows a successful referendum – implementing the National Voice through legislation prior to a referendum may create confusion among the Australian public and obfuscate the referendum process.

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.*

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

Whilst QCOSS recognises that the Local and Regional Voices will work to provide local views to the National Voice, we support From the Heart's position that scope of expertise must be appropriately represented in the National Voice, and sufficient scale of membership is necessary to achieve this.

For the National Voice to receive broad community support it needs to be seen to be a body that is influential and compelling. The National Voice must be taken seriously by governments as a representative voice and a legitimate source of policy, advice, and strategic direction. To that end, the way it gives advice to government and the manner the advice is received is crucial.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide our submission.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Aimee McVeigh". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Aimee McVeigh
Chief Executive Officer