

# An open letter in support of equality and justice

Australia is on the cusp of a historic decision in the advancement of First Nations equality and justice. As not-for-profit organisations living and working on Dja Dja Wurrung, Taungurung, Yorta Yorta and Wurundjeri country, we are committed to walking in solidarity with First Nation communities in the pursuit for equality, justice and truth-telling.

We write this open letter as First Nations communities face backlash against what is a simple ask: the opportunity for them to be able to have a voice on issues that directly affect and impact their lives, children, and kin.

We are concerned not only in the amplification of misinformation over the upcoming referendum, but also about the harmful narratives taking place across our communities.

Our organisations acknowledge our privilege and will use that to amplify the continuing impacts and oppression of colonisation and systemic racism on First Nations people.

At a time where we are about to turn the page on one of our most important chapters, we must ask those of us who do not identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander to acknowledge and accept our role in the living history of colonisation, and ongoing oppression of First Nation families and communities.

We have a responsibility to recognise and acknowledge the enduring trauma inflicted on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as a result of colonisation and systemic racism.

We also recognise the strength and resilience of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in their fight for equality, justice and truth-telling. We recognise and deeply respect the diversity of lived experience and voice within First Nation communities and regard a Voice to Parliament as an important step towards equality and justice.

We have been given an invitation as a nation, to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Nations people of these lands and waterways and, to acknowledge their sovereignty and sacred connection to them. We also have an invitation to uphold the unique human rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as outlined by the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; to seek a future where they have power of their voice, rights, destiny, and that their children flourish. This invitation is to have a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament.

On October 14, we have a chance to re-write history and undo the lie of terra nullius, to undo the constitutional mistake of the past where Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples were not recognised as the First Nation peoples of these lands – over 60,000 years of continuous living history and culture – older than any other culture in the world – exists today on the very lands we are privileged to call home.

We have an opportunity to begin as a nation, a journey of healing.

**It's time for equality. It's time for justice. It's time to say Yes.**

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