

Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition
Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Senators and Members,

Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the committee's consideration of matters relating to constitutional change.

Anglicare Australia supports the clear and consistent call from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples for constitutional reform which makes a real difference in their lives moving forwards. Through the significant Uluru Statement from the Heart, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have made a strong statement seeking changes to ensure that they have a say in policy decisions which affect them, and for progress in establishing a process of agreement-making and truth-telling. This directive must be heard and respected by the Australian Government, with appropriate time and support to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in detailing the preferred consultative relationship with the Commonwealth.

Anglicare Australia is a network of independent local, state, national and international organisations that are linked to the Anglican Church and are joined by values of service, innovation, leadership and the faith that every individual has intrinsic value. Our services are delivered to more than one million Australians, in partnership with them and the communities in which they live. Anglicare Australia has as its Mission "to engage with all Australians to create communities of resilience, hope and justice".

We recognise the historical role the Anglican Church and associated agencies played as part of the dispossession of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, and our responsibility in making proper redress for these injustices and supporting the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Anglicare Australia joins with the Anglican Church of Australia in supporting meaningful constitutional reform.¹

¹ Public Affairs Commission of the Anglican Church of Australia (2018) *Submission to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition Relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples*.

There is desperate need for national policy change to recognise and support the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As articulated in the powerful collective 2016 Redfern Statement from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peak representative organisations:

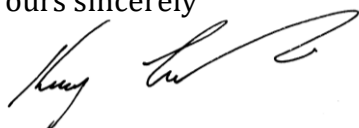
“For the last quarter century, then, we’ve seen seminal reports which have repeatedly emphasised that our people need to have a genuine say in our own lives and decisions that affect our peoples and communities. This, known as self-determination, is the key to closing the gap in outcomes for the First Peoples of these lands and waters.”²

It is crucial that this committee examine the processes through which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are consulted and how self-determination and local decision making can be advanced. The committee must recognise the effect of historical funding cuts to peak Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representative bodies, and continual changes in Government personnel, priorities and policies in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs. It must also recognise that consultation is not enough. There must be ongoing certainty of a clear and legitimate advisory pathway between First Nations and the Australian Government, focused on delivering self-determination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This is consistent with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, endorsed by the Australian Government, which recognises the right of indigenous peoples to self-determination and to “participate in decision-making in matters which would affect their rights, through representatives chosen by themselves in accordance with their own procedures”.³

Anglicare Australia acknowledges the significant and valuable contributions of previous panels and committees in advancing constitutional recognition, and the detailed recommendations of these inquiries. We acknowledge the legal and practical arguments for minimal constitutional change to lay the foundation for further significant progress.⁴ We urge the committee to privilege the voices of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, seeking meaningful reform and the assurance of consultation, greater self-determination and progress towards agreement-making. The Anglicare Australia Network strongly supports such movement towards a “fair and truthful relationship” between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and non-Indigenous Australians.

Thank you for your consideration of Anglicare Australia’s submission. Should the committee seek any further information, I invite you to contact the office on (02) 6230 1775.

Yours sincerely



Kasy Chambers
Executive Director

² National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples (2016) The Redfern Statement.

³ United Nations (2008) United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Article 18.

⁴ See for example, Wood., A (2016) “Constitutional recognition: a case for less is more”, in It’s Our Country: Indigenous arguments for Meaningful Constitutional Recognition and Reform, edited by Davis, M. & Langton, M., pp 104-113.