



Tuesday 26 May, 2020

## **VOICE, TRUTH, TREATY: FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL AUSTRALIANS**

On this – the third anniversary of the Uluru Statement from the Heart – what progress has Australia made in harnessing the brilliance of its First Peoples and walking together towards a better future?

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is clear and considered in its call for a First Nations Voice to Parliament and a Makarrata Commission for truth-telling and agreement-making.

For 60,000 years our people not just survived, but thrived. We want to share the ancient knowledge and practice which underpinned that history, so that all of Australia can adapt to this unique and beautiful landscape.

Even after 200 years of colonial violence and discrimination we are still here, putting our hands up to make the fullest contribution possible to public affairs, not only in pursuit of our own rights and interests, but to enhance the lives of all Australians.

This is more important now than ever, as Australia faces two simultaneous, major crises: Recovering from an unprecedented summer bushfire season and emerging from COVID-19.

For how many more fire seasons will governments go on disregarding our intimate knowledge of – and connection to – Country?

Where is the accountability? How many more Closing the Gap speeches will repeat the same government failures without empowering Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to self-determine our own solutions?

Any referendum campaign risks a great deal of hurt and division across the community, but we will rise to that challenge if there is a meaningful goal. We must not rush into such a challenge based on imposed answers to the wrong questions.

So on this date, we celebrate this landmark national consensus and renew our calls to not just be counted but to be heard.

And not just to realise our own inherent rights and aspirations, but for our culture to take its rightful place in benefiting our national culture and walking together towards a better future for all.

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