

February 16, 2023

## **Ethnic Communities' Council of Victoria**

### **Position Statement: Referendum on First Nations Voice**

This year, Australia will vote on a referendum to enshrine a First Nations Voice to Parliament in our Constitution. The Voice to Parliament will be an independent, representative advisory body that will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to advise the federal government on the issues, policies and laws that affect them.

The referendum takes its lead from the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart, which calls for three main pillars of action: “the establishment of a First Nations Voice to Parliament (Voice) enshrined in the Constitution and a Makarrata Commission to supervise a process of agreement-making (Treaty) and truth-telling about our history (Truth).”

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Council of Australia (FECCA) has lent its full support to the Uluru Statement, which was endorsed by over 900 delegates at the FECCA 2022 conference in Melbourne, co-hosted by ECCV.

As a member of FECCA, we are proud to also pledge our support to the Uluru Statement and affirm the importance of working towards making all three pillars a reality. Recognising this country's First Peoples in the Constitution is crucial, as is the need for Treaty-making and Truth-telling about Australia's colonial history and its continuing impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

The upcoming referendum is an historic opportunity to achieve meaningful, structural change for First Peoples. We believe it's time to walk together as a nation on the path to genuine reconciliation and the foundation of a fair and truthful Australia that future generations can build on and be proud of.

As the peak body for migrant and refugee communities in Victoria, ECCV acknowledges the importance of raising awareness amongst multicultural communities about the referendum and why Voice, Treaty and Truth matter. We are committed to promoting meaningful and respectful dialogue between our diverse communities and First Peoples.

We are grateful for the ongoing guidance of Reconciliation Victoria in this journey. We recognise and respect the diversity of opinions within Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. However, we believe there is widespread agreement on the Uluru Statement's principles of sovereignty, justice and self-determination through Voice, Treaty and Truth. These principles are mutually supportive and should all be progressed.

We also acknowledge the inspiring leadership demonstrated in our state through the establishment of the First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria, the Yoorrook Justice Commission and the Treaty Authority.

The pioneering work being done to negotiate Treaty here in Victoria shows us that the time for change is now. The referendum is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for all Australians to walk, and work, together. The success of the referendum is a critical step in our national journey towards reconciliation, and will lay the building blocks for a more inclusive and just Australia.