

23 March 2023

Law Council unwaveringly supports Constitutional recognition of First Nations peoples

The release today of the question and proposed Constitutional amendment to establish a Voice to Parliament and the Executive that will be put to Australian voters at referendum is a welcome step closer to the necessary and overdue recognition of First Nations peoples in the Australian Constitution.

“The Constitutional enshrinement of the Voice is necessary to meet the aspirations of the Uluru Statement, and to respect the direct wishes of First Nations peoples,” Law Council of Australia President, Mr Luke Murphy said. “Our nation’s support of a Constitutionally enshrined Voice will represent an acceptance of the invitation extended to all Australians in good will by First Nations people through the Uluru Statement.

“The Law Council considers that amending the Constitution to provide for a Voice is a modest step in respecting the enduring value and strength of First Nations culture; recognising the unique place First Nations occupy in Australia’s history as its Indigenous peoples; and overcoming an indisputable legacy of dispossession and disadvantage since European settlement.

“The Law Council considers that the Voice is a necessary and overdue advancement of the right of First Nations peoples to self-determination. The right to self-determination is a fundamental principle of international law,” Mr Murphy said.

“Too often the voices of First Nations persons go unheeded amidst the formal, complex and time-critical processes of lawmaking and implementation. This can, and does, have disastrous consequences.

“Empowering First Nations peoples and enabling their voice to be heard on policies and legislation that impact them will help ‘close the gap’ and address the significant disadvantage First Nations peoples experience across several key indicators such as life expectancy, health, household income, experiences of violence and education.

“A bill containing the text of the proposed amendment to the Constitution will be introduced to the Parliament next week. The Law Council looks forward to making a submission to the joint parliamentary committee inquiry which has been foreshadowed.”

Contact: Kristen Connell, P. 0400 054 227, E. kristen@talkforcemedia.com.au