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Sent: Wednesday, July 5, 2023 3:10 PM
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Subject: Letter from Minister McBain - Voice to Parliament [SEC=OFFICIAL]

OFFICIAL

Good afternoon,

Please find attached a letter from The Hon Kristy McBain MP, Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories, about the role of local governments in The Voice to Parliament and the upcoming referendum.

Kind regards,

Local Government Team

Local Government

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*I would like to acknowledge the traditional custodians of this land on which we meet, work and live.
I recognise and respect their continuing connection to the land, waters and communities.
I pay my respects to Elders past and present and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.*



The Hon Kristy McBain MP

Minister for Regional Development, Local Government and Territories
Member for Eden-Monaro

Dear Mayor/President

I have been meeting with many councils and understand that many of you are being contacted by your communities seeking more information about The Voice to Parliament and the upcoming referendum.

The 2023 referendum will give us the opportunity to recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians in our Constitution through a Voice.

The Voice is about two things: recognition and listening.

Recognition of 65,000 years of continuous connection to land and listening to grassroots solutions to help Close the Gap and improve the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

The 2023 referendum will be a unifying moment – it's about taking Australia forward, for everyone.

The Voice will help bring about practical change by providing First Nations people with a direct line of advice to the Australian Parliament and Government because for too long governments of different political persuasions have made policies for First Nations people, not with First Nations people.

The Voice will be an independent, representative, advisory body for First Nations people. It will mean Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from cities, regions and remote areas across Australia will be able to speak directly to Government.

Establishing a Voice in the Constitution means that when Governments change, the Voice will remain. Laying the groundwork for better programs and policies that will make a long-term difference.

After meetings across the country, the Uluru Statement from the Heart was issued in 2017. This marked the largest First Nations consensus on the way forward in this country. The Uluru Statement asked for constitutional recognition through a Voice. Part of the Uluru Statement reads:

We seek constitutional reforms to empower our people and take a rightful place in our own country. When we have power over our destiny our children will flourish. They will walk in two worlds and their culture will be a gift to their country.

We call for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

The proposed amendment to the Constitution is legally sound. The Solicitor General's advice states that:

The proposed amendment is not only compatible with the system of representative and responsible government established under the Constitution, but it enhances that system.