

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

I speak from the heart and say it is time for the establishment of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution. My family came here as convicts and migrants, legally recognised and protected and otherwise, and on behalf of my family who has been here since the early days of European settlement I can honestly say that this is only the beginning of what is needed for our country to be able to look its First People in their eyes and say 'Sorry' and mean it. Sorry is only the first step, and a faltering one.

It is time we keep the promises that were made on the 25th of March, 1949, and the 17th of December, 1965, and the 27th of May, 1967, and the 16th of August, 1975, and the 3rd of June, 1992, and the 26th of May, 1997, and the 28th of May, 2000, and the 13th of February, 2008.

It is time we truly honour our commitment to representation and recognition and rights for the people of Australia's First Nations and continue to uphold our commitment to reconciliation and our shared responsibility for this country.

The fact that we are still turning our back on Australia's indigenous people and their right to be heard in their own land is a shame we will carry until it is resolved.

Nonetheless, I agree with the former Prime Minister, Julia Gillard, that guilt is not a particularly productive emotion for understanding or rectifying the abuses of the past; I am only asking, on behalf of myself and my family and my community, for this small chance to vote for hope, and for change.

With thanks,

Dr Don Sillence
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