



Committee Secretary  
Joint Select Committee on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice Referendum  
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17 April 2023

To the Secretary,

The Central Land Council (CLC) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the provisions of the *Constitution Alteration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) 2023 (Bill)* for the purposes of this Joint Select Committee Inquiry.

### **About the Central Land Council**

The Central Land Council (CLC) is a Commonwealth corporate entity established under the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976 (ALRA), with statutory responsibilities for Aboriginal land acquisition and land management in the southern half of the Northern Territory (NT). The CLC is also a Native Title Representative Body established under the Native Title Act 1993 (NTA).

Pursuant to ALRA, more than 50 per cent of the NT and more than 85 per cent of the NT coastline is now held by Aboriginal Land Trusts on behalf of traditional owners. A further 253,886 square kilometres of land and water is also held under native title.

Of the approximately 780,000 km<sup>2</sup> of land covered by the CLC region, more than half (417,318 km<sup>2</sup>) is Aboriginal land under the ALRA. In addition, rights have been asserted and won under the NTA, and traditional owners unable to claim land under the ALRA have succeeded in obtaining rights to small areas known as Community Living Areas, under NT legislation.

Through its elected representative Council of 90 community delegates, the CLC represents the interests and aspirations of approximately 20,000 traditional landowners and other Aboriginal people resident in its region. We advocate for our people on a wide range of land-based, economic and socio-political issues to ensure that our families can continue to survive and thrive on their land.

### **CLC Comments on the Provisions of the Bill**

The Central Land Council supports all elements of the Uluru Statement from the Heart including Constitutional recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through establishment of a Voice to Parliament. This has been demonstrated through three separate resolutions of the full Council that support the Uluru Statement and Voice to Parliament. The Central Land Council also

respects and supports the dedicated work of the National Referendum Working Group and the final negotiated wording of the Constitutional amendments now contained in the provisions of the bill including:

The inclusion of Chapter IX and s 129 in the Constitution that would recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia in the Constitution through an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice (Voice).

### **Chapter IX—Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People**

#### **S129 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice**

In recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of Australia:

- (i) There shall be a body, to be called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice;
- (ii) The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice may make representations to the Parliament and the Executive Government of the Commonwealth on matters relating to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples;
- (iii) The Parliament shall, subject to this Constitution, have power to make laws with respect to Matters relating to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice, including its composition, functions, powers and procedures.

The position of the Central Land Council is best summed up in these sections of the CLC Brumby Plains Statement endorsed by our 90 delegates in 2017:

*We, the members of the Central Land Council are sovereign people drawing our strength and laws from country. We sing for country, we dance for country and our laws and systems of governance are still strong.*

*The Australian Constitution must recognise us as First Nations of Australia. Nothing will be lost, instead Australia will gain 65,000 years of culture and history. We endorse the Uluru Statement, which calls for constitutional protection for a Voice to Parliament, supports treaty-making and truth-telling.*

*We want to be part of designing the Voice to Parliament to ensure it represents people from the bush, and to ensure it is powerful. This work should be progressed before we go ahead with a referendum.*

*A successful referendum requires the support of non-Indigenous people, and we invite all Australians to join us on this journey to achieve constitutional reform.*

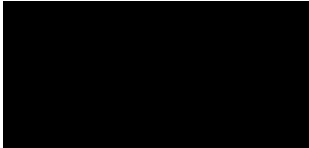
We are pleased that since this resolution was passed in 2017 important work has been carried out to get us to the stage where we can confidently progress to a referendum in 2023. This includes:

- the three co-design groups established by former federal Minister for Indigenous Affairs Ken Wyatt including a Senior Advisory Group, a Local and Regional co-design group and a National co-design group tasked with consulting on widely on options for and Indigenous Voice. This work culminated in the Langton and Calma Indigenous Voice co-design process final report;
- the Referendum Working Group which advised the government on the timing, wording and information needed for a successful referendum; and

- The Referendum Engagement Group which has engaged with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and the broader community to build understanding and awareness and support for the referendum.

The Central Land Council welcomes this opportunity to support the provisions of the *Constitution Alteration (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice) 2023 (Bill)*.

Kind Regards



Les Turner  
CEO