



# Statement of Support for the Voice to the Australian Government

From the St Vincent de Paul Society Canberra/Goulburn

In 2017 the Uluru Statement from the Heart was created as an invitation from First Nations people of Australia to non-Indigenous Australians to walk together for a better future.

The Statement called for an advisory body, 'The Voice', to speak directly to parliament and the federal government on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander policies and laws that directly affected them, including health, education and economic and social disadvantage.

These issues are at the forefront of so much of the work we do.

Respect is one of the Society's core values, guiding our members, volunteers and staff to provide service to all regardless of creed, ethnic or social background, health, gender or political opinions.

We have listened with deep respect to what our First Nations sisters and brothers have asked in The Voice and support them at the Referendum.

Our founder Frederic Ozanam learned through his work alleviating poverty and social disadvantage, that he could help those on the margins of society much more effectively by listening and understanding their journey.

This ethos is still applied in our work today as we walk with those we serve, until they are in a place where they no longer need our help.

We believe that any policy or legislative decision will achieve better outcomes if government listens directly to those affected by those decisions.

In our role as social justice advocates, we speak to governments and those in a position to shape our society on behalf of those who can't speak for themselves. We know that this advocacy can shape decisions for the better for those we serve.

A Voice to Parliament will create a pathway for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to speak directly to the parliament about the decisions that affects their lives.

1 in 5 people who come to us for assistance identifies as a First Nations person.

We see first-hand the social disadvantage they experience, providing them a hand-up with empathy, commitment, and compassion.

A Voice to Parliament marks a new chapter in our national reconciliation and healing journey.

We encourage you to listen to the voices of First Nations Peoples, read the Uluru Statement from the Heart and engage in respectful discussions with your communities to learn more about this important vote.

In the lead up to the referendum we ask that as you learn more and discuss this important issue, you do it with fairness and mutual respect, for we acknowledge that not all will share the Society's position.

Our work to address social and economic hardship among our First Nations people continues, but we believe that having a constitutionally enshrined Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice to Parliament will create a more hopeful and just Australia.