



Submission to the Indigenous Voice consultation

March 2021

## Submission to Indigenous Voice consultation

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### Overview

Volunteering Australia and the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies share a common goal of volunteering being inclusive of all members of the Australian community. We are currently working with the Australian Government in the redesign of the Volunteer Management Activity which includes a focus on working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to empower their further participation in volunteering in Australia.

We welcome the co-design process to develop an Indigenous Voice and support the advancement of measures that can raise the voices of First Nations people in public policy development and enactment, including in relation to volunteering policy and practice.

We highlight that the proposals need to be seen in the context of the Uluru Statement from the Heart which calls for a Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution. The Australian Government needs to honour its election commitment to a referendum on constitutional recognition.

### Introduction

#### About the Indigenous Voice process

On 30 October 2019, the Minister for Indigenous Australians, the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, announced the start of the Indigenous Voice co-design process.

Stage one of the co-design process saw three Indigenous Voice co-design groups, comprising 52 members from around the country, work together to develop the detail of what an Indigenous Voice could look like and how it could work. Stage one is now complete, and the proposals were presented to the Australian Government in late-October 2020<sup>1</sup>.

Stage two is now underway. Individuals, communities and organisations are invited to provide feedback on how they think the proposals for Local and Regional Voices and a National Voice could work for them. This input is designed to help the Indigenous Voice co-design groups further develop and refine the proposals. Final recommendations will then be made to the Australian Government.

#### About this submission

We welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the consultation on the Indigenous Voice proposals.

This submission was drafted by Volunteering Australia in collaboration with the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> Available here <https://voice.niaa.gov.au/resources>

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### Our contribution

As National and State and Territory peak volunteering bodies, we share an ambition for volunteering to be inclusive of all members of the Australian community. Being First Nations people, Indigenous Australians are at the very heart of our society.

The proposals for an Indigenous Voice are aimed at providing a way for Indigenous Australians to provide advice and input on matters that are important to improve their lives. This includes an array of public policy concerns of which volunteering policy is one. Volunteering, whether through an organisation or informally in community, can support individual wellbeing and enhance community resilience.

Research<sup>2</sup> has shown that First Nations People can see volunteering differently to non-Indigenous people. Volunteering is often more fluid, local and responsive to community needs, rather than structured, targeted and regular. First Nations People can face structural disadvantages that impact their ability to participate in 'formal volunteering' (volunteering through an organisation) and mainstream volunteering programs are typically not tailored for First Nations People.

Volunteering Australia and the State and Territory peak volunteering bodies are seeking to redress these barriers to volunteering through our policy and advocacy work and through working with volunteer involving organisation to support the adoption of volunteering practices that are culturally aware and safe for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

In the current redesign of the Volunteer Management Activity<sup>3</sup>, we are working with the Australian Government to build the capacity of volunteer involving organisations to break down barriers for 'priority groups', which includes First Nations People.

We support the advancement of measures that can raise the voices of First Nations people in public policy development and enactment. Overall, we support the co-design process and the proposals that have been developed by the co-design groups. We would like to make the following points:

- The Indigenous Voice proposals need to be seen in the context of the Uluru Statement from the Heart which calls for a Voice enshrined in the Australian Constitution.
- The Australian Government needs to honour its election commitment to a referendum on constitutional recognition once a model for the Voice has been agreed.
- Legislation to enable the Voice would then be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.communitybusinesspartnership.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/giving\\_and\\_volunteering\\_in\\_cald\\_and\\_indigenous\\_communities.pdf](https://www.communitybusinesspartnership.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/giving_and_volunteering_in_cald_and_indigenous_communities.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.dss.gov.au/communities-and-vulnerable-people-programs-services-volunteer-management/volunteer-management-activity-summary>

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### Authorisation

This submission has been authorised by the Chief Executive Officer of Volunteering Australia.



Mr Mark Pearce  
Chief Executive Officer

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### Endorsements

This position statement has been endorsed by the seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies.



### About Volunteering Australia

Volunteering Australia is the national peak body for volunteering, working to advance volunteering in the Australian community. The seven State and Territory volunteering peak bodies work to advance and promote volunteering in their respective jurisdictions and are Foundation Members of Volunteering Australia.

Volunteering Australia's vision is strong, connected communities through volunteering. Our mission is to lead, strengthen, promote and celebrate volunteering in Australia.

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### State and Territory Volunteering Peak Bodies

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