



5 May 2021

MEDIA RELEASE

National Indigenous Voice must be enshrined in the Constitution

The National Council of the St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia calls for a National Voice to be enshrined in The Australian Constitution as part of its response to the Indigenous Voice Co-Design Interim Report to the Australian Government.

Although not a First Nations Organisation, the Society has been helping the Australian community for over 165 years. People who identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander constitute 10 to 95 percent of those we assist in any given year, depending on the type of service and location.

National President, Claire Victory said that enshrining a National Voice in The Constitution would strengthen empowerment, self-determination and subsidiarity and that substantial reform to consultation processes and delivery of programs is also needed.

‘In addition to support for the From the Heart Campaign, the Society calls on the Australian Government to honour its election commitment to hold a referendum once a model for the Voice has been settled,’ Ms Victory said.

‘The Society supports the passage of enabling legislation for the Voice to be passed after a referendum has been held in the next term of Parliament.

‘And we support a membership model for the National Voice that ensures previously unheard Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have the same chance as established leadership figures of being selected.

‘Any membership, representative or consultative body needs to reflect the fact that communities are unique and constantly changing; and the body needs to be agile enough to respond to localised issues but have the mandate to address national matters.

‘The approach outlined by the From the Heart campaign will give Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people a say on the policies and laws that impact their lives. It will also ensure that Parliament and the Australian Government are more appropriately informed in their approach to Indigenous affairs policy and law-making. Ultimately, this will result in better outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

‘Better outcomes will only be achieved when Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are able to “live in dignity, to maintain and strengthen their own institutions, cultures and traditions and to pursue their self determined development, in keeping with their own needs and aspirations” as set out in the United National Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

On a visit to Alice Springs 35 years ago, Pope John Paul II stated that “what has been done cannot be undone. But what can now be done to remedy the deeds of yesterday must not be put off till tomorrow.”

A copy of the National Council’s submission is available [here](#).

The St Vincent de Paul Society in Australia consists of 60,000 members and volunteers who operate on the ground through over 1,000 groups located in local communities across the country.

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