

TheMHS Learning Network Incorporated wholeheartedly supports a **First Nations Voice to Parliament**



TheMHS Learning Network Incorporated proudly accepts the kind invitation from The Uluru Statement from the Heart, to walk in a movement of the Australian people for a better future. This starts by enshrining an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice into the Australian Constitution in the form they have long sought and have requested through the Referendum taking place later this year. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity for the people of Australia to unite in our past and to build a shared future through recognition in the Constitution. The Voice is a mechanism to ensure that advice by First Nations peoples is valued and that policy and strategic directions are developed in a coherent, consultative, and accountable way.

In 2023, Australian people will vote on a formal mechanism enshrined in the Constitution, for First Nations peoples to advise on issues directly affecting them. The Voice is our opportunity to unite Australian people in an enduring way by embracing the spirit of The Uluru Statement from the Heart.

This decision is now entrusted to the people of Australia.

TheMHS is an interdisciplinary national mental health organisation and believes the Voice will lead to improved outcomes for the health, mental health, and social & emotional wellbeing of First Nations peoples. We are encouraged by the groundswell of organisations who have made similar public statements of support for the Voice.

The revolving policy and program approaches that have been in place for decades have not been fully successful in Closing the Gap and the Voice provides an important opportunity to improve this. The Voice can be Nation Building, impact on the national psyche and improve Australia's relationships with First Nations peoples by reshaping the future in our shared journey as a nation. While TheMHS is supportive of The Voice, we appreciate there are differing views.

We advocate for discussions on the Voice and the Referendum so that all Australians are informed, truthful and respectful.

Our nation's future is too important to leave this opportunity to chance or to promote division and racism.

TheMHS supports and advocates for the approach taken by the Yes Campaign including:

1. Meaningful symbolic recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First peoples of Australia in the Australian Constitution;
2. Practical recognition and a mechanism for advice to Government through a Voice, and
3. The recognition that Indigenous people have long sought, in the form they have requested.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart is an invitation which is now in the hands of the nation. TheMHS believes the people of Australia will join together and make a decision for our national identity and our future as a mature nation.

For mental health or crisis support, call 13YARN (13 92 76) or Lifeline Australia (13 11 14) or Beyond Blue (1300 224 636)

Drafting of Statement led by Tom Brideson, Kamillaroi/Gomeroi man, Association Member and former Chairperson, TheMHS Learning Network Inc.

Authorised by The Mental Health Services Learning Network Incorporated

L. Dunbar, Secretary, TheMHS Learning Network Inc.

132, 85 Reynolds St, Balmain, Sydney, NSW, 2041.

16 June 2023

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