

31st August 2023**Public Statement****Indigenous Voice to Parliament****T: 1800 319 255****E: info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au**

As the Latrobe Health Advocate, my support for the Indigenous Voice to Parliament is fortified by the resounding calls for reform and a self-determining future expressed in the public statement of the Gunaikurnai Land and Waters Aboriginal Corporation (GLAWAC), as well as the invaluable insights gleaned from engaging with the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community through our "Engagement Inspiration" initiative.

GLAWAC's statement poignantly underscores the need for a more inclusive democracy that recognizes and promotes the rights of Indigenous Australians. This echoes the sentiments from community members I have had the privilege to engage with. Their collective voices have highlighted the enduring impacts of historical injustices, the ongoing struggle for self-determination, and the imperative for a platform that allows their perspectives to shape the decisions affecting their lives.

Through our "Engagement Inspiration" initiative, I have witnessed firsthand the resilience, wisdom, and aspirations of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. Their stories illuminate the pressing issues they face, including healthcare disparities, cultural preservation, and land rights. It is self-evident to me that a dedicated Indigenous Voice to Parliament is not just an essential step in addressing a disgraceful history of abuse and disadvantage, failed interventions and ineffective policies, but is also long overdue.

First Nations people must be formally recognised as the First Peoples of Australia in our constitution, this omission has already lasted way too long. First Nations people should be guaranteed a permanent platform to ensure that their voice is heard by Parliament and Government. Australia's history is littered with policy and community engagement arrangements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities that have been established and terminated when Government changes occur.

The voice is one of three components proposed by the Uluru Statement from the Heart to improve the future health and wellbeing of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community. The other components, Treaty and Truth, are being progressed in Victoria through the Yoorrook Justice Commission, a formal truth-telling process into the injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria that commenced operation in March 2022, and the treaty negotiations with the First Peoples' Assembly that commenced in August 2020.

I will continue to work to ensure that the perspectives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people shape policies, programs, and services that truly reflect their needs, ultimately fostering a more equitable and inclusive society for all Australians.

My office at 2 Tarwin Street, Morwell is open to the public on Tuesday and Thursday from 9am – 5pm, and we are available by phone or email Monday to Friday. You can contact the team by phoning 1800 319 255 or emailing info@lhadvocate.vic.gov.au. You can also follow us on Facebook for more updates at [@LHAdvocate](https://www.facebook.com/LHAdvocate).

Jane

Jane Anderson

Latrobe Health Advocate