Our Position on the Voice to Parliament

Health Consumers Tasmania is a proud supporter of The Uluru Statement from the Heart. The Uluru Statement from the Heart is a request from Aboriginal communities to the Australian people calling for a First Nations Voice to be written into the Australian Constitution. Australians will be asked to vote to change the Constitution later this year to achieve this.

Health Consumers Tasmania believe this is a good thing because:

The intention of The Voice is to further the self-determination of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples by enabling them greater say on matters that affect them.

We understand the importance and significance of communities having a meaningful say on issues impacting them, because, as a not-for-profit, community-based organisation, that is what we do. Our purpose is to build a consumer voice across Tasmania in health.

We do this for four reasons:

- Firstly, because we see first-hand the enormous benefits of involving communities directly in the decision making on programs and initiatives that impact them.
- Secondly, because there is evidence that shows that when people have a voice, the services they receive are actually what they need, are more relevant and effective, and are better understood by those who use them,
- Thirdly, there is greater accountability and transparency for those delivering the services, and
- Lastly, Health Consumers Tasmania advocates for the Australian Charter of Healthcare Rights – that all Australians have access to the health services they need, at a time and place they need them, and these services are delivered in a culturally safe way. According to Closing the Gap reports, this is not happening for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, and this urgently needs to change.

Health Consumers Tasmania’s Community of Interest has confirmed both its support for the Uluru Statement from the Heart and for Health Consumers Tasmania to recognise the importance and significance of Aboriginal communities having a meaningful say on issues impacting them.

The Statement from the Heart also calls for the establishment of a Makarrata Commission, an independent body responsible for overseeing Truth Telling and Agreement Making (Treaty).

As such, Health Consumers Tasmania encourages the Tasmanian and Federal Governments to enact all components of the Uluru Statement from the Heart with urgency – The Voice, Makarrata (Treaty) and Truth Telling. Health Consumers Tasmania calls for a respectful conversation to occur across Tasmania on the referendum and we acknowledge that:
• there are Aboriginal communities who have differing views and we support Aboriginal peoples expressing their views on this important issue;
• for many Tasmanian Aboriginal people, The Voice is not seen as a priority for reform through a process of a referendum, particularly in the context of the ongoing disempowerment, social and physical displacement that they endure; and
• for many Tasmanian Aboriginal people, the current public conversation is distressing, it is causing hurt and pain, and it is seen as non-aboriginal Australians discussing their views on what they believe is best for Aboriginal people, sometimes in a disrespectful and paternalistic manner.