

## MEDIA RELEASE

23 February 2023

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### CSSV backs enshrinement of Indigenous Voice to Parliament

Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV) has released a statement, [Relentlessly Pursuing Reconciliation](#), in support of a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament as articulated by the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#).

The upcoming national referendum on the constitution provides an opportunity for Australians to support the Statement from the Heart and to embrace the cries of our First Nations Peoples for a just future, a means of recognition and a way forward for healing and learning together.

CSSV joins with the [Australian Catholic Bishops Conference](#), [Catholic Religious Australia](#), and the recent [5<sup>th</sup> Plenary Council of the Catholic Church in Australia](#), all of which believe that a Voice to Parliament will provide a platform for deeper listening and allow for the appreciation of different perspectives and ways of doing, being and living by those making legislation and policy.

CSSV acknowledges the deep pain that has been inflicted over many generations, including racist government policies and public attitudes. We recognize the corresponding loss and disruption of culture and connection with land, stolen generations, and genocidal acts, including our own place within this horrific past. However, the strength of conviction for a just future and the good will of many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples despite this history inspires us.

Josh Lourensz, Executive Director, Catholic Social Services Victoria, said: "CSSV believes a constitutionally enshrined Voice—with its integration of listening, action, influence, and symbolism—is key to changing our nation for the better. The Voice will also allow community listening and discussion on different ways of being and doing life together in Australia, which will be of great value to us all."

Sherry Balcombe, Council Member of CSSV and an Olkola/Djabugay woman, said: "To embrace the aspirations of our First Nations Peoples to take their rightful place in Australian society and gain true equality, we must enact a constitutionally enshrined Voice to Parliament. Principles of 'Justice', 'Enrichment and Healing', and 'Equity' for our First Nations People must be addressed, and action taken, if we are to write a new chapter and move on positively together as a country."

Fr Joe Caddy, Episcopal Vicar for Social Services, Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, added: "We have reached a time of great possibility in making meaningful reparation for the past and building a better future – in this moment it is the offer of a constitutional referendum to decide upon a Voice to the Australian Parliament. CSSV recognises a Voice to Parliament as the beginning, with truth-telling and treaty also being vitally important in the broader work of reconciliation."

CSSV knows that the success of any referendum relies on a 'double majority' vote in the affirmative. We implore each member of the Victorian and Australian community to make every effort to ensure this valuable opportunity is not missed. By finding common ground, setting aside political differences, and seizing this as an opportunity to listen and learn we can positively bring into being a time where all in Australia may flourish. Let us take hold of this valuable opportunity to listen and learn and bring into being a time where all in Australia 'may have life and have it abundantly'.

*The Council and Members of CSSV celebrate that our engagement throughout Victoria takes place on the sacred land and waterways of the many cultural groups of the Aboriginal Peoples of Victoria. CSSV is committed to listening and walking with the First Peoples of Australia in the true*

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*spirit of makarrata: coming together after this long painful struggle for recognition, true justice, and full flourishing for all Australians. CSSV is committed to helping its members, and the broader Victorian community to understand this call, more deeply. Further resources related to Voice to Parliament, can be found [here](#).*

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**For enquiries and further comment on CSSV's statement:**

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