

MEDIA RELEASE

Voice to Parliament – an Important Stepping Stone

Catholic Religious Australia (CRA) has long been a vocal supporter of the Uluru Statement from the Heart and an advocate for a constitutionally protected voice, truth-telling and treaty.

In March 2021, CRA made a [submission](#) to the Indigenous Voice Co-Design Process calling for enshrinement of the Voice in the Australian Constitution through a referendum.

The Catholic Social Teaching principle of subsidiarity holds that all people have a right to participate in decisions made about their lives and that decisions should be made by those closest to, and most affected by, the outcome.

Many of CRA's Members have lived and worked alongside First Nations people for years, sometimes decades. Asaeli Rass SVD, Provincial Leader of the Divine Word Missionaries and member of CRA Council says, "Like the Uluru Statement from the Heart, the Voice to Parliament is an important stepping stone on the path towards respectful engagement, treaty-making and truth telling."

"The failure of previous governments to close the gap is a strong reminder that the cries of some of the most vulnerable peoples on earth have not been heard," he added.

One Member also informed CRA that while supporting the establishment of a Voice to Parliament, the government needs to provide better education and increase community engagement on the issue, especially with the people who will be most affected by the changes.

"I am concerned that not enough education has been provided around the changes proposed," said Philippa Murphy FDNAC, Provincial Leader of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart and Executive member of CRA Council.

"Some of our Religious Sisters working in remote Indigenous communities have expressed concern that the people don't know enough about how the Voice will bring meaningful change to their lives."

"The Voice is a complex issue but many CRA Members, such as our congregation, believe it is the most effective way to enable voices of First Nations people to inform and shape the policies that affect their lives."

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