

*****MEDIA RELEASE*****

Caritas Australia expresses support for Voice to Parliament

30 May 2023

With compassion in our hearts, Caritas Australia embraces and supports the creation of a First Nations Voice enshrined in the Constitution.

Christine Rhazi, a proud Yamatji Widi woman from Geraldton, Western Australia, and Caritas Australia's Associate Director for First Australian Programs, said:

"The *Uluru Statement from the Heart* invited all Australians to walk together towards justice. We have wholeheartedly accepted this invitation and we strive to walk in union and solidarity with our First Australian partners and communities across our land. We fully support the call for Voice, Treaty and Truth."

"It is clear that a constitutionally enshrined Indigenous Voice will provide a necessary platform for consultation with First Australians on a local level. For First Australian communities to flourish, we must ensure that all people have the right to participate in the decisions that impact their lives and those of future generations. First Australians have the solutions, and it is time for everyone else to listen."

As an organisation, Caritas Australia decries the unacceptable gap between First Australians and other Australians across every measure of wellbeing, including financial, social, physical and mental health. We acknowledge that these inequalities are the consequence of Australia's colonial history, systemic discrimination and injustice and the failure to place First Australians at the centre of decision-making.

"We must invest in our First Australian communities, and close the gap in wellbeing and other outcomes, but we also know that these decisions must be made with, rather than for First Australians in order for them to be effective. The time has come for First Australians to be empowered to make the decisions that affect their lives, because we do have the answers," said Ms Rhazi.

Caritas Australia is committed to working towards a more just society where all can thrive, closing the gap between First Australians and non-First Australians. We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the First Peoples of Australia and respect their cultures, lands, waters, histories, and right to live in a society free of economic, social, and cultural oppression.

By enshrining a Voice in the Constitution, we as a community will take another step towards the full realisation of human dignity and unity for all Australians. It is only when the dignity and rights of all people are fully realised that a just and compassionate world will come into being.

See Caritas Australia's full statement on the Voice on our First Australians Advocacy page: <https://www.caritas.org.au/act/with-first-australians/>

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NOTE:

Christine Rhazi, Caritas Australia's First Australians Associate Director is available for interview.

Caritas Australia works in close partnership with First Australian-led organisations to support programs that focus on intergenerational healing, strengthening cultural identity and spirituality, livelihood opportunities, and advocacy.

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