

MEDIA RELEASE

15 October 2023

CSSV will continue to relentlessly pursue reconciliation.

Catholic Social Services Victoria (CSSV) acknowledges that the Victorian and Australian voting population has confirmed its decision not to enshrine an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Voice to Parliament in the Constitution. CSSV also acknowledges the need to continue to relentlessly pursue reconciliation.

Together with many of our 40 social services members, our faith communities, bishops, and religious congregations, CSSV supported constitutional recognition of First Nations Peoples through a Voice to Parliament as articulated by the [Uluru Statement from the Heart](#). The invitation of this Statement, and this referendum, was an invitation to embrace the calls of our First Nations Peoples for a just future, a means of recognition and a way forward for healing and learning together.

CSSV remains committed to building a better future for our First Nations people. We believe that a better future for all Australians is contingent on this work being done. CSSV recognises that the Voice to Parliament was one element in a much broader reckoning and process, and so we remain committed to the ongoing work of truth-telling and treaty. We are grateful for the [Yoorrook Justice Commission](#) and [First Peoples' Assembly of Victoria](#), which are both integral in pursuing a better way of being and better future for all Victorians.

Commenting on the referendum result, CSSV executive director, Joshua Lourensz, says, 'This has been a difficult campaign and there are divisions that we need to work through as a country. We stand particularly with our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander colleagues and friends particularly in this time. We remain hopeful that we can continue to draw from the good will of so many in working toward healing and reconciliation into the future.'

'We know from our extensive engagement through being a member of the [One Journey, Together initiative](#) working group there is a deep desire from many within the Catholic and wider community, including social services, health and education, our bishops, clergy and congregations, and our parishes, that want to see renewed and different relationships between contemporary Australians from a variety of rich global cultural heritages and First Nations people. Inspired by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we continue to hope and work so that "all may have life and have it to the full".

'CSSV remains committed to the complex work of reconciliation, and to bringing about tangible change and healing in our country.'

CSSV acknowledges and applauds all who have worked tirelessly to see a positive result in the lead up to the referendum, and those who have worked to assist the Australian people to make a well-informed decision. CSSV particularly acknowledges the leadership and tireless work of its Council member and Victorian representative for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Catholic Council ([NATSICC](#)), Sherry Balcombe.

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CSSV remains committed to listening and supporting NATSICC, and other First Nations community leaders as we join in the hope articulated by the Australian Catholic Bishops Conference in their most recent social justice statement, [Listen Learn Love](#): “We hope for an end to the pain, the hurt and the injustice that has burdened the First Peoples of this land for far too long. Let us commit ourselves to fostering a civilisation of love in Australia. Let’s come together in friendship and love to show all that love can not only change individual lives, but that it can change society for the better.”

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