

Australia's international museum body accepts the invitation from First Nations Australians to establish a First Nations Voice to Parliament and welcomes it as a significant and necessary step for the nation

MEDIA STATEMENT

Date 3 September 2023

The International Council of Museums (ICOM) Australia accepts the invitation from First Nations Australians to establish a First Nations Voice to Parliament to be enshrined in the Australian Constitution.

The Uluru Statement from the Heart was presented to Australia in 2017 following a constitutional convention of over 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates who met at the base of Uluru. They asked the nation to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to create a better future by enshrining a First Nations Voice in the Australian Constitution.

ICOM Australia chair, Jessica Bridgfoot, said "We are committed to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and to cross-cultural understanding through respectful relationships and truth-telling. The Voice will strengthen communities as well as our sector's ability to educate and inspire all Australians.

Australian museums and galleries have been working with Indigenous communities for many years to improve engagement, develop trust and support self-determination and cultural revitalisation. It is time now to encourage all Australians to support this journey.

By supporting The Voice, ICOM Australia is also committed to working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to achieve Makarrata: *the coming together after a struggle*. This is the aspiration of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island delegates to Uluru who want to work towards a better future.

ICOM Australia will work to help museums to maintain the 65,000 years of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander continuous occupation, by encouraging community engagement, truth-telling, First Nations stories, exhibitions and voice in the museum sector.

Ms Bridgfoot added that "we encourage members and the Australian public to seek further information about The Voice by visiting <https://ulurustatement.org/> website and to make their own informed decision to vote at the referendum in October."

<https://www.yes23.com.au>

Background

ICOM is the largest international network of museum and heritage professionals, with more than 44,500 members around the world. ICOM Australia provides the international voice for over 650 Australian museum and gallery professionals and institutions and upholds international standards, conventions, and ethics.

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